

# What's the Big Deal About Charisma? Here's What LPM Leaders Really Need

By [Carla Landry](#) on January 23, 2024

What's the big deal about charisma? It's simple. Many charismatic leaders can mobilize their followers and inspire them to create a stronger, more profitable alliance. But that's not true of every person with charisma. There is a dark side to this trait and there are plenty of charismatic leaders who are narcissistic, manipulative, domineering, and worse. Most personality experts, in fact, acknowledge that charisma has its downsides.

[Jochen Mendes](#), a German leadership researcher, identified what he calls the "awestruck effect." Simply put, it's the theory that people suppress their emotions in the presence of charismatic leadership and could become more vulnerable and less able to make critical decisions for themselves. The awestruck effect makes them more susceptible to, for example, the abuse of power. Think of the rise of many malevolent dictators. This vulnerability may be especially exacerbated during times of economic crisis or social instability.

Fortunately, one doesn't need charisma to inspire others. As mentioned in Part 1 of this three-part series, Simon Sinek, in his [video](#), lays out 10 recommendations for inspiring others even when you lack charisma.

1. Stand together.
2. Be a giver.
3. Find courage.
4. Create an amazing work environment.
5. Be the last to speak.
6. Have balance.
7. Commit to consistency.
8. Just be yourself.
9. Communicate your why.
10. Take action.

In Part 1 of this series, we covered the first three. If you haven't yet read the article, you can check it out [here](#). In Part 2, we'll cover the next three.

## Create an Amazing Work Environment

Whether you are a parent or a partner, a friend or a boss, you know it's not easy to create relationships that work well. The same is true of your work environment. You may be an outstanding visionary with a clear view of the top of the mountain. But you must also be willing to put in the hard work to ensure that your team can tackle the many obstacles that would keep you from summiting. That means creating an amazing (and resilient) work environment. It's not easy, it requires skills to navigate the way forward. That's the job of a leader.

Some time ago, Sinek recalls that he was working in Las Vegas. He would regularly visit the coffee shop in the Four Seasons lobby where he chatted with a dynamic young man who worked there as a barista. Clearly an asset to his employer, the worker loved what he did. When Sinek asked him why he enjoyed his job so much, he said that he felt

supported there. Managers frequently walked around and would ask how he was doing and if he needed anything. An ambitious go-getter, the young man had a second job, as well, at a well-known gambling salon. There, he said, the managers only came around to monitor and catch employees doing something wrong. Understandably, he hated that job.

According to Sinek, “No one wakes up in the morning and wants to be managed. We wake up in the morning and want to be led.” That’s what happens in an amazing work environment.

### **Be the Last to Speak**

The quest for primacy probably starts way before kindergarten. Be the first—first in line, first to finish putting your crayons away, first one to shout out the letter C for cookie. But as a leader, being the first to speak can put you at a disadvantage, particularly if you’re genuinely interested in what others have to say. Once you tell others what you think, you run the risk of leading the witness (just to mix various metaphors).

The strategy of being the last to speak is simple yet challenging. To use this one effectively, you must be curious and interested in what others have to say. This happens somewhere in the middle of doing your homework. If the gesture is cursory and you’ve already made up your mind, you will do more harm than good by asking others for their opinion.

Listen with your whole body, not just your ears. Turn toward the speaker, make occasional eye contact, take notes, don’t interrupt, and gather more information. Allow others to ask questions without shooting down the idea or interjecting their own solutions. Everyone gets a chance to not just speak, but to be heard.

Nelson Mandela is universally regarded as a great leader. Sinek reports that when Mandela was asked how he learned to lead, he said that his father was his role model. He would go to tribal meetings with him where everyone would sit in a circle and his father was always the last to speak.

It’s important to not give others any indication of your stance. Go around the room and give everyone the same opportunity to contribute. If you or others tend to interrupt, set ground rules in advance and ask everyone to be responsible for gently calling others out on violations. By being the last to speak, you have the benefit of making a more informed opinion as well as allowing everyone the opportunity to be part of the team.

### **Have Balance**

Sinek sometimes veers off on a tangent and we must admit, he lost us a bit on this one. We thought this might be a section about work-life balance. Instead, he talks about dopamine and creating a balanced system. Your systems must be balanced to achieve your practice group’s objectives.

But what does this have to do with dopamine? Dopamine can play a role in binge drinking, drug abuse, overeating, and the Pavlovian response to your cell phone ping. But, dopamine is generated in other ways, as well. For example, researchers have long discovered that checking things off a list provides a hit of dopamine. If you are a chronic list maker, you already know the power of daily to-dos. Sinek admits to adding a task to his list that he forgot to include just for the pleasure of crossing it off. (Of course, I would never do that.)

What’s so good about dopamine anyway? Dopamine is known as the feel-good hormone. It drives human beings toward intrinsic motivation. Turns out it also makes people feel more social, even extroverted. While we aren’t trying to turn introverts into extroverts, a few extroverted traits can help make your group work more effectively. Dopamine helps ensure that things get done.

How can you infuse more dopamine and, thus, more initiative, in your LPM efforts? One of the best ways is by creating powerful and inspiring metrics and tangible goals. Each goal achieved helps create the momentum to keep going. They must be the right goals, however, goals that are inspiring and supported by the right tools and the right behaviors. If your processes are broken or you don't have the necessary resources, you will see your LPM initiative go astray. You'll get dopamine from promoting the wrong things. This creates the type of imbalance—and bad behaviors—that make it difficult to realize the benefits of LPM.

### **Bred Not Born**

At the end of the day, LPM optimizes your operations, minimizes risk, and promotes the efficiencies and transparency that clients love. You don't need charisma to lead your team to the outcomes that spell success. You can inspire others by getting just a few things consistently right and building the necessary skills within your team. Charismatic people can be great leaders, but great leaders need more than charisma. Fortunately, these other qualities are far more important and easier to cultivate.

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