

## What makes a good leader: Charisma or Competence?

BY GREG SCHINKEL

With national elections in both Canada and the United States, the question on most voters' minds is, "Who will be the best leader?" Business owners, managers and supervisors can learn from this scrutiny to strengthen their own leadership skills.

While leading a department, division or company may not be in the same league as Prime Minister or President, it has a big impact on the lives and careers of many employees and their families.

### Charisma

The American Heritage Dictionary defines charisma as "A rare personal quality attributed to leaders who arouse fervent popular devotion and enthusiasm." Based on this definition, charisma is rare and many people might perceive that you either have it or you don't. The good news is that charisma can be cultivated and developed to make you a better leader at work, at home and in the community.

A colleague of mine shared the story of how employees who worked for her late father's tool shop still approach her on the street to express their feelings for her dad. He had such a way of connecting personally with each employee that tears of joy and sadness still come to their eyes months after his passing. The demise of this kind of devotion to leadership could be blamed on cultural shifts. In reality there are very few leaders who are charismatic and competent enough to warrant such fervent



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support.

Want to be more charismatic? Take an active interest in others, be a good listener, and speak from the heart. Confront the annoying or aggravating behaviours that work against you. Ensure there is integrity between what you say and how you behave. Charisma comes from confronting your own self doubts and letting your talents and gifts shine.

### Competence is essential

People evaluate competence through the decisions you make, the plans and strategies you craft, your knowledge and experience. Your achievements and track record are scrutinized to determine whether you are able to get the job done.

Your competence is called into question if you are uncertain about making decisions, fail to learn from your mistakes and exhibit questionable judgement. Seek opportunities to demonstrate success. Challenge yourself to tackle proj-

ects and goals, even if there is a risk of failure.

### Competence is a must have, Charisma is a bonus

Respect is earned from your competence and integrity. A charismatic leader may be charming, however they may not stand up to close scrutiny if they are deemed incompetent. The most powerful combination is competence and charisma together in one package.

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### Would your employees elect you as their leader?

While your employees may not cast votes at a company ballot box, they do vote with their feet, and your leadership can either attract or repel talented team members. The behaviour and performance you see in your employees is a direct reflection of the influence you have as a leader.

So in the upcoming weeks, as you see political candidates in action, observe their style and substance and see what you can learn in order to become a more charismatic and competent leader in your organization.

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