1. Topic

Managers make choices every day. You may, for example, help others on your team without expecting anything in return. When a manager is seen to be fair, empowering others, or, when a manager is known as being self-serving, a personal brand has been established.

In every organization, there are managers who exhibit ‘smile up, kiss up, kick down, snarl down’ behaviours. This means that they show one face to their superiors and a very different face to those under their direction. As Bill Gates observed at the World Economic Forum, “there are two great forces of human nature: self-interest, and, caring for others.” High-performing leaders are those who succeed by helping others achieve their objectives, in a values-based fashion. Empowering leaders actively respond to the needs of those around them.

2. Assignment

In this Crucial Conversation for Women in Management Module, you have the opportunity to define your personal brand. How do you wish to be perceived by your employees, peers, partners and superiors? You are invited to examine the ways in which perceptions of your leadership either strengthen or weaken your ability to achieve results. Ask yourself the following questions:

a) “Who am I being as a leader in the world?”

b) “Is the brand you are projecting aligned with the leadership contribution you wish to make?”

c) “Have you allowed your personal leadership brand to be defined by default? Or, have you consciously shaped your brand and tested its legitimacy with your colleagues?”

d) “If you did not occupy your current position in the hierarchy as a manager, would employees choose to follow you as a leader?”

e) “Are you seen as a leader who helps others to achieve greatness, while advancing your interests and those of the organization at the same time?”

Answering these questions enables you to discern whether your personal brand, as a manager, is congruent with your ‘best’ values, personal aspirations, and, contributions to organizational life.

3. Video Descriptions and Instructions

Participants will be asked to view a thought-provoking video, featuring David Brooks, from a March 2014 Ted Talk, called: “Should you live for your résumé...or for your
eulogy?” The video is 5 minutes in duration. It touches upon the ‘self’ who craves success and who builds a CV, as well as the ‘self’ who seeks connection, a sense of community, and love – values that contribute to a great eulogy. Balancing these two selves (referred to as Adam I and Adam II) is critical to achieving self-knowledge and leadership growth. Women decide how best to strike the balance between the worldly and ambitious side of their nature and their desire to ‘do good’ and to ‘be good,’ creating a personal brand in the process.

The second video, by the Harvard Business Review, features Dorie Clark. It is entitled, “Take Control of Your Personal Brand.” The 3 minute presentation provides women managers with key strategies for developing or reinventing their personal brand. Participants are asked, “What are you known for?” “What are people saying about you when you leave the room?”

Women who view this second video are encouraged to actively identify their unique value proposition to the organization. Viewers are asked to highlight the points of difference that set them apart from every other manager in the room – creating a powerful personal narrative.

The third video, by Susan Colantuono, entitled, “The Career Advice You Probably Didn’t Get” is 13 minutes in duration. It was filmed in November of 2013 for a TedX Talk (https://www.ted.com/talks/susan_colantuono_the_career_advice_you_probably_didn't_get?language=en). This video invites women managers to design their personal brand around three pillars for success, to advance organizational, personal and team objectives. The video explains why many women are mired in the middle ranks of management and offers strategies for advancement.

Ultimately, women must focus on where the organization is going and define their leadership role in taking the organization forward. It is not sufficient for women managers to demonstrate personal greatness and to engage the greatness in others. Women managers must also demonstrate that they know the business of their organization, its partners, clients and stakeholders. Managers who identify strategic business opportunities for their organization are more likely to see upwards movement and advancement.

4. Follow-up Activities and Application

Review the videos and then:

a) Design a personal brand, taking into account the strategies outlined in the three videos.

b) Test your proposed personal brand with trusted colleagues, employees and superiors. Ask them how you are seen as a leader.

c) Determine whether your personal brand is consistent with organizational priorities.
d) Refine your leadership narrative (brand) to ensure that people know what you ‘stand for’ as a leader, and, why they should care.

e) Identify an unforgettable or distinctive difference that sets you apart from others in your organization.

f) Examine whether your personal brand meets your values and ethics test. Would you be comfortable seeing one of your key messages emblazoned across your website or appearing in social media? Would your parents or loved ones be proud to see this message communicated broadly?

g) Analyze whether your personal brand is inclusive and whether others can see a contribution they might wish to make to your leadership directions.

5. Expert Knowledge

Dawn Nicholson-O’Brien is the President and CEO of Celtic Oracle, an executive services consulting firm. A former executive in the Government of Canada, Dawn served in executive level roles during three and a half decades. She also served as the Vice President of the Institute on Governance, has developed and delivered advanced leadership programs for executives, and, is the recipient of numerous leadership awards. She is a sought-after speaker and author (www.celticoracle.ca).

6. Key Words

Key words include: Personal branding; distinctive difference; personal narrative; emotional intelligence; two selves - Adam I and Adam II; servant leader; give to receive; personal greatness; engage greatness in others; purpose-driven leader; relationships; values.

7. Additional Resources and Reading

Additional resources and readings follow so that participants can develop their leadership brand.

- Catherine Kaputa, author of The Female Brand, http://www.womensconference.org/your-personal-brand/
- Adam Grant, Give and Take
- Daniel Pink, To Sell Is Human: The Surprising Truth About Moving Others
- Travis Bradberry and Jean Greaves, Emotional Intelligence 2.0
Curated Video Titles


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