

‘You Had Me at Hello’ The Use of Narrative in Building a Charismatic Leader Reputation

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Abstract

Charismatic leadership finds importance in a wide variety of fields from athletics to business to education to philanthropic endeavours, etc., and has been a part of our lives, whether we have realised or not, from the beginning of our existence. In fact, from elections for class president in elementary school to board member selections for Fortune 500 companies, that unspecific charismatic quality of one’s personality impacts virtually every field that relies on leadership. The relationship of charisma to business communication has been previously explored only in limited measure and this article examines four contemporary business leaders who were able to leverage their own communication skills to help build their charismatic reputations. The ability of leaders to sell a certain narrative has been a major key to the success of their respective companies and for developing their own specific brand of charismatic leadership.

Keyword: Leadership, Charisma, CEO, Management, Communication, Narrative

Introduction

In the 1996 film, *Jerry Maguire*, Thomas Cruise Map other IV, otherwise known as Tom Cruise, plays the titular character, a young sports agent trying to balance career with love. After typical romantic comedy melodrama, where boy meets girl, boy loses girl, boy meets second girl, boy loses second girl, Jerry Maguire realizes what is really important in life. After nearly losing his budding career as well, Jerry salvages his relationship with his star client

and sets his sights on winning back the aforementioned second love, Dorothy. To convince Dorothy to give him another chance, Jerry flies back home to share his feelings. Upon arriving at Dorothy’s house, where she is having a party with some of her friends, Jerry walks into the living room and says a simple “Hello” before moving into a several minute soliloquy. In this soliloquy, he explains to her, and the rest of those gathered, that he loves her and that he wants her back in his life, and he ends his plea with the memorable cinematic quote, “You complete me.” (Crowe, 1996). Dorothy’s reply to Jerry becomes another memorable movie line, actually one of the top 100 movie lines in history, when she says, “You had me at ‘hello.’” (Crowe, 1996).

While the described scene may arguably be one of the most romantic scenes in movie history, one has to wonder if the speech would have had the same impact if it were spoken by a comedic actor such as Robin Williams or Woody Allen. Certainly an actor’s personal charisma would make a difference in the way in which the scene plays out and the director might have had another way for Dorothy to verbalise her approval were he working with a different leading man. The scene works because it is played by one of Hollywood’s male romantic leads and the character, though sometimes obnoxious, has a certain charismatic quality that other characters in the movie seem to appreciate.

Charisma is, quite obviously, a mysterious aspect of personality that is hard to nail down. While charisma has been defined as a “personal magic of leadership arousing special popular loyalty or enthusiasm for a public figure,” (Merriam-Webster, 2014) it is a quality that is quite difficult to describe in concrete terms. Originally deriving from a Greek word meaning “gift of grace,” the

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term initially referred to divinely conferred charisma. (Merriam-Webster, 2014) A charismatic person was one who had received God's favour. In time, theologians and social scientists added a second category described as personality charisma (Derman, 2011). While this second category, personality charisma, did not necessarily originate from a divine source, it still represented an unknown, almost magical, quality. It is well apparent that, while some charismatic leaders have shared certain physical or intellectual traits, every so often leaders emerge outside of any pre-conceived notions. As Ralph Peters, a journalist and media commentator, writes in his article, *The Riddle of Charisma*, "Charisma itself remains a riddle. It may be assisted by beauty or physical stature, by an incisive intelligence or special talent, but is as likely to manifest itself in a figure of no special physical appeal and lacking a first-rate intellect." (Peters, 2010). In other words, while it is hard to put our finger on what charisma is, we know it when we see it.

The interest in charismatic leadership is not new, and the role of charismatic leadership has remained discussed and debated for generations. Max Weber, a German sociologist, philosopher, and political economist, who wrote *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization* in the early 1900's, although it was not translated until 1947, was the first scholar to separate charisma from divine intervention. Nonetheless, he still described charisma as "a certain quality of an individual personality by virtue of which he is set apart from ordinary men and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman or at least specifically exceptional powers or qualities." (Weber, 1947). In this work, Weber established the precedent that charismatic leadership relies on non-traditional authoritative influence as distinguished from "legal/rational" or "traditional" authority (Weber, 1947). By this measure, authoritative influence cannot always be rationally explained, as there are historical occasions where leaders exert great influence without virtue of traditional authority.

During the American Revolution, the Founding Fathers were divided on the role of charisma in leadership. While some saw the benefits of popularity, others were concerned about reliance on charisma in leadership and in elections. Richard Couto writes in his article, *Dear Publius: Reflections on the Founding Fathers and Charismatic Leadership*, "As a set of charismatic leaders, the Founding Fathers were deeply suspicious of charismatic leadership. They feared popular government

for the likelihood that a heroic figure, without leadership ability or sufficient respect for the propertied classes, could be swept into political power." (Couto, 2002). Couto goes on to describe the constitutional measures the Founding Fathers devised to prevent such leaders from reaching the pinnacles of power, and most especially, the presidency, despite the fact that our first president was indeed a charismatic war hero (Couto, 2002). It is an apparent truth, however, that whatever constitutional barriers existed at one time, have been gradually removed over the past two hundred years and charisma has become an important aspect of the political process.

In the article *Max Weber and Charisma: A Transatlantic Affair*, author Joshua Derman quotes former columnist Russell Baker, who, in a New York Times article from the spring of 1968, declared that "the big thing in politics these days is charisma, pronounced 'karizma'" noting, for example, that all the Kennedys possessed it, whereas Hubert Humphrey and Richard Nixon did not. That Baker went so far as to spell charisma phonetically suggests that he expected many of his readers were still unfamiliar with it." (Derman, 2011). Today, whether or not all Americans can spell charisma, the majority often make their election decisions based on the mysterious quality. It seems that we are long removed from the days when uncharismatic presidential candidates such as Martin Van Buren or Richard Nixon could actually be elected, just ask John McCain. Like it or not, explain it or not, charisma matters in the electoral process. That being said, professional politicians are not the only source of charismatic leadership.

Charismatic leadership also finds importance in a much wider variety of fields from athletics to business to education to philanthropic endeavors, etc., and has been a part of our lives, whether we have realised or not, from the beginning of our existence. In fact, from elections for class president in elementary school to board member selections for Fortune 500 companies, that unspecific charismatic quality of one's personality impacts virtually every field that relies on leadership. Part of human nature is that desire for something special, something mysterious and undefined. We want to feel that our leaders have a certain something that puts them apart. C. Stephen Jaeger in his article *Aura and Charisma: Two Useful Concepts in Critical Theory*, explains: "Charisma is always only a physical, embodied quality; it cannot be perceived apart from the person who possesses it or onto whom the

perceiver projects it. Charisma, either embodied in a living person or a work of art, ordinarily involves the projection, willed or unconscious, of an aggrandized essence, role, or nature beyond what normal human beings possess. The suggestions that issue from the charismatic figure, the visible claims of the body or audible ones of the voice, swell into inflated visions in the mind of the beholder." (Jaeger, 2011). So, perhaps there is answer, charisma is in the eye of the beholder. A leader has charisma because we believe them to have charisma. This charisma could have been earned or it could have been awarded by process of the media or other propaganda. In that regard, how could John F. Kennedy not have charisma? He was a young, handsome war hero with a seemingly perfect family, or at least that was the message that was sold during his era. Perhaps charisma is not that mysterious after all, but it is definitely an advantage in leadership.

Literature Review

Mahatma Gandhi

In the contemporary context, charismatic leadership is often identified with transformational leadership. While transformational leadership emphasizes an ethical component of decision making, personality charisma does not necessarily reveal the level of ethical thought in leaders. India's revolutionary leader, Mahatma Gandhi was certainly a charismatic, transformational leader who held to a very high ethical standard, however, not every charismatic leader ascribes to the same value system. Perhaps the major key point in the link between charismatic leadership and transformational leadership is in the perception of followers. If followers believe in the leader, they will often see a leader who cares about the important issues and follows a high ethical standard in decision making, whether or not that is a true fact in the private life of the leader. This is one reason why charismatic leaders can have a significant fall from grace in response to any ethical or moral scandal.

In a 2011 article published in the *Journal of Business Ethics*, the authors describe this connection between transformational leadership and charismatic leadership. "Transformative leadership is an ethically-based leadership model that integrates a commitment to values and outcomes by optimizing the long-term interests of stakeholders and society and honouring the moral duties owed by organisations to their stakeholders. It is in living

the highest standards of moral leadership that leaders merit the trust and followership of others (Ciulla *et al.*, 2005)." (Caldwell *et al.*, 2012) In related way, "Charismatic leadership creates a leader–follower relationship in which leaders create a strong personal bond with followers. This connection reflects their followers' convictions of "their leader's extraordinary character" which inspires followers to achieve unprecedented results." (Caldwell *et al.*, 2012).

The intriguing point of the aforementioned article is that strong bond between a charismatic leader and their followers. While it is not always true that a perceived charismatic leader is as extraordinary as their followers believe them to be, it is that strong connection that creates the deep level of followership and helps build the solid belief that their chosen leader is worthy of such immense devotion. There are examples in history, such as the case of Gandhi, where the reason for the deep connection can be explained fairly rationally. Gandhi's character and self-sacrificial nature created a deep bond with his followers and one might expect some level of devotion between the followers and their leader in this situation. Gandhi is one example of a transformational, charismatic leader who won over his followers through the casting of a great vision for the common good. Although he did not possess any particular mysterious charismatic quality, his method of communicating his vision through personal sacrifice created a timeless charismatic leader. As Robert House writes in *Weber and the neo-charismatic leadership paradigm: A response to Beyer*: "consider, for example, Mahatma Gandhi, Nelson Mandela, and Mother Teresa. Their appeal has been more in their vision and their methods of implementation than in their personality." (House, 1999).

Gandhi made distinct advantage of available communication structures early on in his leadership experience through the Congress Party. The communication structures available through the Congress Party gave Gandhi a direct link to a vast audience and greatly accelerated his rise to prominence. As Gandhi articulated a vision of freedom that appealed to the masses, his popularity grew and, in time, his transformational, charismatic leadership was made manifest through demonstrations of humility and self-sacrifice. While lacking in raw personality charisma, Gandhi became charismatic by virtue of communicating a popular vision through a strong personal link to the struggle of the people.

Adolf Hitler

While Gandhi is one historical leader who demonstrated charismatic leadership for reasons that can be more easily understood, other historical examples are harder to explain. One of the most interesting questions regarding historical examples of charismatic leadership centres on Adolf Hitler. Was Hitler a charismatic leader? A number of leadership studies have addressed this question, and determined that, by most definitions, the answer is yes. Eva Horn writes in her 2011 article, *Work on Charisma: Writing Hitler's Biography* published in *The New German Critique*: "There is a consensus in research on Nazism that Hitler's power indeed involved a specific modality of 'charismatic rule' and that his rise was based on forms of charismatic-affective bonding with a mass of followers. But the relevant historical, sociological, and social-psychological studies have rarely rendered palpable the efficacy of charisma in a given social and cultural situation." (Horn, 2011). Essentially, the answer is yes that Hitler was a charismatic leader but the attainment of this position was done through manipulation, deceit, and coercion. Charismatic leadership obtained in this manner does not lead to long term effectiveness for the leader or for the followers.

Adolf Hitler was a master of self-promotion and created his own narrative which sold the story of a divinely ordained, charismatic leader. While physically he did not necessarily have the normal advantages reflecting charisma, such as physical stature or great intellect, Hitler was a self-proclaimed charismatic and eventually convinced enough followers of this claim. He was a leader that took advantage of the time and circumstances in which he lived as he delivered a message of hope to a people who were waiting for a great leader to emerge. "Hitler surfaced in the heart of the small Nazi party during 1922-23, it is only in 1924, when he was serving his sentence in Landsberg fortress, that Hitler fully and openly affirmed his charismatic claim: he, and no one else, is the 'Great Man' awaited by the German people. It is at this moment that he declares he is endowed with a 'mission'; even to be the envoy of 'Providence.'" (Schmölders, 2011).

Thus it was a matter of timing and marketing that created the leadership opportunity for Adolf Hitler. The German people were ready for hero to lead them into the promised future, and since Hitler believed himself to be that hero, he only needed to sell his message to an audience that

was ready and waiting to hear it. A different message or a different time would not have afforded Hitler the opportunity to ascend. As he manufactured a story that would sell, Hitler manipulated himself into a position where he was able to sway popular opinion and create a distinct image for himself in the minds of the populace. "Above all, we witness Hitler's own effort in creating charisma through a specific type of narrative. In *Mein Kampf (My Struggle)*, wildly borrowing plot elements from fairy tales, heroic epic, German *Bildungsroman* (novel of personal growth), hagiography, and Karl May, Hitler constructs his autobiography as a man elected by fate and thus endowed with a charisma that is indeed a "gift of grace," a given quality." (Horn, 2011). Perhaps, the major reason that Germany prefers its modern leaders a little less charismatic has to do with their traumatic historical experiences with a self-proclaimed charismatic leader.

The aforementioned examples of charismatic leadership, the good and the bad, cannot be described in terms of possessing raw or natural personality charisma. Gandhi gained his charisma in small increments through the communication of a certain vision combined with a clear interest in personal self-sacrifice; while Adolf Hitler gained his charisma through the marketing of his specially designed narrative during an opportune time in history. Neither case was necessarily a situation of, "You had me at hello." (Crowe, 1996) Both Gandhi and Hitler used their communication structures to build their popularity over time through an expressed vision that people were ready and waiting to hear. However, once their charisma was established, it then became a matter of showing up. These examples prove that once charismatic leadership is established, people begin to believe in the messenger more than the message. Unfortunately for Germany, their chosen charismatic leader, after gaining position, pushed a warped message that nearly destroyed their country and certainly destroyed many lives.

For the remainder of this paper, I will examine four contemporary American business leaders addressing how charismatic leadership relates to their message and the reception of their message. Some of these examples may indeed possess those mysterious qualities of personality charisma and even begin their leadership journeys with that advantage, while others may have gained their personality charisma over time through previous communication, the sharing of a new and exciting vision or by a series of financial successes. Either way, the goal

of the study is to examine the impact of charisma on the reception of business leaders and, in a related way, the perceived effectiveness of their communication.

Steve Jobs

Steve Jobs is another leader who leveraged his intellectual capability in building his position as a charismatic leader. Like many other successful leaders, Steve Jobs had a genetic advantage in terms of intelligence. Although abandoned by his biological parents and adopted by Paul Reinhold Jobs and Clara Jobs, neither of whom were college graduates, Jobs' birth parents were highly educated. (Isaacson, 2011) His father, Abdulfattah Jandali, obtained a PhD at a young age, later becoming a professor and business manager, and his biological sister, Mona Simpson, became a Professor of English and award winning author. (Isaacson, 2011) The natural intelligence received by nature of birth combined with the inner desire to succeed, perhaps partially driven by that early abandonment by his birth parents, created a perfect potentiality for success.

Unlike intellectual leaders who obtain Ivy League or equivalent education however, Steve Jobs only lasted six months in higher education. He officially dropped out of Reed College in Portland, Oregon in 1972 and took a technician job at electronic manufacturer Atari, in Los Gatos, California after a period of auditing classes, including calligraphy, at Reed College. (Isaacson, 2011) It was at Atari that Jobs met his eventually partner, Steve Wozniak and after working on projects together, with Jobs providing the vision expertise and Wozniak providing the technical expertise, the two set out to build a new computer to take on IBM. The modest operation, started out of Jobs parent's garage, eventually expanded with the addition of some key employees chosen to direct the young company. In 1983, Jobs was able convince John Sculley, who was serving as President of Pepsi-Cola to serve as Apple's CEO. The often referenced Jobs quote used to convince John Sculley became quite well known and provides a glimpse into the charismatic communicative influence of Steve Jobs. He was able to win over Sculley with his exhortation: "Do you want to sell sugar water for the rest of your life, or do you want to come with me and change the world?" (Isaacson, 2011).

There is no doubt that, as a leader, Steve Jobs was demanding. He was a workaholic himself and, in many

ways, he required that from his employees. (Khurana, 2002) The fact that Jobs was able to inspire that high level of dedication and achievement from his employees was due in large part to his communication skills in inspiring others to reach beyond the ordinary. He had a gift for communicating a big, world-changing vision and those who worked for him, while not always secure in their position in the company, believed that they could really accomplish those lofty goals if they put forth the effort. "Revered for his success in introducing people to the personal computer-which he dubbed the Star Wars-like "force" that could guarantee our "freedom" -Jobs created a corporate culture that has become widespread. In this new organisation, employees were supposed to work ceaselessly, uncomplainingly, and even for relatively low pay not just to produce and sell a product but to realize the vision of the messianic leader." (Khurana, 2002).

Steve Jobs had a way of inspiring employees, despite being known as a demanding, take no prisoners, leader. However, it was not just employees that Jobs was capable of inspiring. In many ways, he inspired an entire generation to think beyond the ordinary into a new world of expectant innovation. Jobs learned to leverage his public presentations to capitalize on the inspirational vision. Instead of being relegated to asking only employees to change the world, Jobs began to demand that kind of devotion from his audiences. "For instance, when he introduced the iPhone at Macworld 2007, Jobs passionately and logically argued that the iPhone will change how people interact with each other and the world. Past successful innovations, such as the invention of the personal computer, provided supporting evidence and credibility for his claim that his products exceed accepted barriers and change the world." (Ivic, 2011).

Steve Jobs became a master of presentation and left no aspect of his planned announcements to chance. It is in fact Steve Jobs well planned presentations that solidified his reputation as a charismatic leader. When Jobs announced the Microsoft deal in Boston in August, 1997, he choreographed the announcement to the last detail. He went with a very simple backdrop, with a minimalist stage framed by two illuminated vertical columns displaying the Apple logo. (Sharma, 2011) On this minimalist stage, Jobs positioned himself at the center dressed in a white mock-turtleneck shirt, with his sleeves rolled up, a half-buttoned black cardigan and grey business trousers. This uniform became the routine for such announcements to create a casual, youthful atmosphere. In a 2011 article

entitled *Narrative, drama and charismatic leadership: The case of Apple's Steve Jobs*, author Abz Sharma describes stagecraft skills of Jobs and the connection between Jobs' attire and the atmosphere surrounding the Microsoft announcement, that set the standards for future Apple announcements. "Jobs' distinctive ensemble – with rolled up shirt sleeves and half-buttoned cardigan – lend his performance a casual and intimate feel, much akin to a 'town hall'-style meeting." (Sharma. 2011).

Abz Sharma's article sheds light on the choreographed use of narrative and storytelling to help build the charismatic leader reputation. While Steve Jobs was not the beloved charismatic leader by close associates, and certainly not on par with historical charismatic figures like Mahatma Gandhi, his communication skills, and specifically his choreographed presentations, were more than enough to overcome any personal shortcomings in the personal relationship department. As Sharma explains, "Our analysis of Steve Jobs' three performance-related texts reveals three important insights into the construction of Jobs as charismatic leader. First, Jobs utilises narrative and story telling as powerful persuasive devices in each of the three performances. Fundamentally, Jobs' performances are meaningfully sequenced, bound by a plot device, and comprise an 'original state of affairs'; a catalyst; and a 'consequent state of affairs', which constitute a narrative" (Sharma, 2011). After over a decade of using these skills to his advantage, Steve Jobs merely had to show up. Shareholders, Apple fans and the tech world at large, began to lean on every word, even before those words were spoken. The success of Apple combined with Jobs gifts of public communication secured his place in history as a charismatic leader.

Jamie Dimon

While Jamie Dimon may not be quite the household name as Steve Jobs, he has been able to build a solid leadership reputation on Wall Street and in top financial circles as one of the strongest, most charismatic leaders of the financial/banking industry to emerge in recent years. His reputation is so solidified within the industry that he has been able to overcome some serious problems that occurred under his leadership at JP Morgan Chase, one of the four largest banks in the United States. It is clear that Dimon has faced some significant challenges over the past couple of years following the "London whale" debacle, which saw JP

Morgan having to deal with a \$2 billion dollar loss, yet his reputation as a gifted and charismatic leader in the financial world has not completely folded.

It was just five years ago that Jamie Dimon was heralded as a hero of the financial crisis of 2008. In an illustration accompanying a book review published in *Business week* in 2009, Jamie Dimon is depicted as a knight in shining armor, sword in hand ready to wield battle against the forces that challenge the global financial market. In the article itself, reviewer Mara Der Hovanesian, reviewing the *Last Man Standing: The Ascent of Jamie Dimon and JP Morgan Chase* by Duff McDonald, describes the glowing reputation of the rising star of the financial world (albeit prior to the more current challenges at JP Morgan Chase). She describes the respect that Dimon had received from a variety of leaders in reaction to his leadership of JP Morgan Chase during the financial crisis. As she writes: "Few figures of today's financial world are more respected than Jamie Dimon, CEO of JP Morgan Chase. For a banker to emerge from the financial meltdown with mere flesh wounds might be accomplishment enough. But for Dimon-whose rise, fall, and rise again has been one of the most compelling stories on Wall Street for decades-the crisis proved he is much more than a survivor. Dimon has earned the ear of the U.S. President, the gratitude of the Treasury Department for helping the U.S. escape financial ruin, and the respect of legendary investor Warren Buffett." (Hovanesian, 2009).

Like many charismatic leaders, Jamie Dimon was able to leverage significant opportunities at key moments in his life, and being the son of an American Express executive vice president certainly did not hurt. While Steve Jobs leveraged his intellectual brainpower, Dimon, while no slacker in the intellectual department holding an undergraduate degree from Tufts University and an MBA from Harvard, was able to make an important connection early on through his father leveraging that family advantage. Immediately following graduation from Harvard Business School, Dimon was able to latch on to another charismatic leader in the financial services industry, Sanford Weill, who would eventually become CEO of Citigroup. (Langley, 2003). Weill brought Dimon along over the next sixteen years, first at American Express, later at a consumer finance company called Commercial Credit which would become Travelers Insurance, and, ultimately, through a series of mergers and acquisitions, Travelers would become Citigroup, the largest multinational financial services company in

the world with Dimon serving as Chief Financial Officer (Langley, 2003). After a falling out with Sandy Weill, Dimon left Citigroup in 1998 but landed on his feet becoming CEO of Bank One, then the fifth largest bank in the United States (Langley, 2003).

The ability to effectively communicate is a hallmark of the charismatic leader (Levine, Muenchen & Brooks, 2010) and fortunately for Dimon, at that very important turning point in his career, he was able to showcase his leadership and vision to the Bank One board in a two hour presentation as he vied for the top job. In the Harvard Business Review article, *The Curse of the Superstar CEO*, Rakesh Khurana describes Dimon's selection as the CEO of Bank One, which ultimately resulted in his opportunity to assume the CEO position at JP Morgan upon a subsequent merger in 2004. Even though Dimon had unceremoniously departed from Citigroup, he had a way of showcasing his intellectual capability to the Board of Directors and landed the position. "Despite Dimon's apparent drawbacks, he dazzled Bank One's directors. Following a two-hour presentation he made to the board's search committee, outside director and committee chair John Hall summarised his colleagues' reaction; 'Everyone knew he was brilliant, but the presentation showed just how brilliant he was.' Another member of the search committee enthused that Dimon was the kind of leader who 'would not waste time getting stability and consensus, but instead would do what it took to make us the number one bank stock.'" (Khurana, 2013).

Apparently the Board was impressed by his driven nature to succeed. He indicated that he was ready to come in and make whatever changes were necessary to improve Bank One's position among its peers and this was just the change that the Board desired at that particular time. After obtaining the position as CEO of Bank One, Dimon continued to build on his charismatic leader reputation. Fortune magazine profiled Jamie Dimon in 2002 in a biographic narrative entitled *He's tough. He's loud. He's irrepressible. He's above reproach. And he's just what Bank One needed.* The article focused on Dimon's penchant for the theatrical, akin to Steve Jobs, and his non-nonsense way of making tough decisions. Dimon's gift for charismatic leadership is revealed by way of describing a Bank One corporate gathering. "It's show time at the gargantuan, glass-framed McCormick Plaza in Chicago. En route to the stage, Jamie Dimon, the 46-year-old CEO of Bank One, gets ambushed by rowdy revelers squirting

foamy strands of Silly String. Can in hand, Dimon fires a gooey salvo to rebuff his attackers, then strides to the podium to the thumping pulse of Steppenwolf's "Born to be Wild." It's the kind of rank-and-file crowd he owns, a conga-line prancing, Hawaiian lei-sporting, banner-shaking sea of systems analysts, loan officers, and branch managers." (Tully, 2002).

The description goes on to quote Dimon, half CEO and half cheerleader, leading the charge at the beginning of the corporate meeting: "What do I think of our competitors? I hate them! I want them to bleed!" (Tully, 2002). In his desire to be tough on competitors, Dimon was also tough on his own employees. Within his first two years, he replaced 12 out of 13 top managers and demanded the most from his staff, including Friday afternoon calls to make sure his key people were on the job, even if he was half way around the world at the time (Tully, 2002).

These efforts led to great success for Bank One and for Dimon personally. Following the Bank One merger with JP Morgan Chase in 2004, Dimon came on board as president and Chief Operating Officer and eventually was promoted to CEO in 2006. Today, as CEO of the nation's largest bank by assets, Dimon has been able to weather the recent storms following the \$2 billion dollar trading loss previously mentioned, and a \$13 billion dollar settlement with the US government over the JP Morgan's sale of mortgage-backed securities in 2008, by virtue of his reputation (Zillman, 2013). Perhaps the most difficult moment of Dimon's career in the financial services, notwithstanding the quick ouster from Citigroup, was his appearance at a Senate Banking Committee hearing regarding that \$2 billion dollar JP Morgan trading loss (Kurtzleben, 2012). While protestors gathered outside the building, the senate committee had its opportunity to demonstrate that they were fulfilling their own oversight obligations and grilled Dimon on the trading disaster and the knowledge or lack of knowledge JP Morgan executives had involving the situation (Kurtzleben, 2012). Dimon handled the difficult situation as well as possible and while his reputation did suffer and lost "Dimon favour in D.C., it won't cost him his job. In a market where money is the only measure that matters, Dimon is still untouchable." (Zillman, 2013). Even with the recent trading scandal and settlement, when Dimon speaks, his reputation precedes him and many people, whether they be employees, traders, government officials, etc., are eager to listen very closely to his analysis.

Meg Whitman

After Carly Fiorina's ouster from Hewlett Packard in 2005, the company went through two male CEOs, Mark Hurd and Leo Apotheker, before hiring Meg Whitman in September 2011 (Karlgaard, 2011). Whitman had joined the board of HP in January of 2011, and the HP Board of Directors made the decision to offer Whitman the CEO position in hopes that she could garner the same level of success that she had obtained over a decade at eBay. An article published in *Forbes* magazine in 2011, describes Whitman's unparalleled success at the helm of eBay. "With eBay Whitman broke from the mold. She became CEO in 1998, when eBay had 30 employees and \$4.7 million in revenue. Her tenure lasted ten years and oversaw eBay's growth to \$7.7 billion and 15,000 employees. Her genius stroke was the PayPal acquisition in 2002." (Karlgaard, 2011).

While it remains to be seen whether or not Whitman can indeed replicate that kind of success at HP, her steady but ever progressing career path has solidified her position among the most powerful woman in business over the past fifteen years. Whitman's path to business success in Silicon Valley was much more traditional than other tech icons such as Steve Jobs or Bill Gates. Educated at Princeton, where she received her Bachelor of Arts in Economics, and Harvard, where she received her Master of Business Administration, Whitman first embarked on a career as a business strategist spending time with Proctor and Gamble, Bain Capital and Walt Disney (Karlgaard, 2011). She did well at Disney becoming Vice President of Strategic Planning before moving to operational positions at Stride Rite (Stride Rite Division Manager), Florist Transworld Delivery (CEO), and Hasbro (Playskool Division Manager). She eventually joined the fledgling internet auction house eBay in 1998 (Karlgaard, 2011).

With the move to eBay, Whitman took a career risk just as the company took a chance on her as well. The late 1990's saw a number of Silicon Valley firms reaching out to Ivy-league educated managers to bridge their free thinking entrepreneurial slant with a traditional management model (Ranft, Ferris, Zinko & Buckley, 2006). Whitman was just such a candidate to "bring legitimacy" to the upstart idea of an online auction house (Ranft, Ferris, Zinko & Buckley, 2006). "Her Harvard MBA, her acumen for successful marketing at Hasbro toys, Florists Transworld Delivery and Stride Rite, had gained her a reputation as a level-headed,

savvy, successful performer. However, she had no known association with the technology industry, scant experience in emerging technologies, and no previous success with complicated dot.com business models." (Ranft, Ferris, Zinko & Buckley, 2006). The worry about Whitman's lack of specific industry experience was short lived because within six months of being named CEO, Whitman took the company public with an initial market value of \$700 million (Brown, 2007).

It was the helm of eBay that Meg Whitman built her charisma through hands on leadership. She was known for getting right in the middle of the fray, spotting potential trouble spots and monitoring the problem first hand. During one particularly challenging hardware problem that caused a 22-hour outage Whitman literally lived in the information technology operations center. "We put in cots, and I was just there," she says. "I lived it." (Melymuka, 2000). When asked about moving into the technology field, Whitman suggested that she relied on instinct to see her way through (Melymuka, 2000). It was her instinct that led her to take the position at eBay in the first place and it was her hands-on approach that made her charismatic reputation (Melymuka, 2000).

In an article published in *Forbes* in 2007, entitled, *What would Meg Do?* the author, Ericka Brown describes another hands-on incident where Whitman provided leadership and compassion to her employees modeling a form of servant leadership that greatly added to her leadership narrative. "She was on a flight to India with three other eBay employees when one of them developed a dangerous gastrointestinal problem somewhere over Tehran. Whitman pulled out an atlas and decided Istanbul was the nearest, safest city in which they could land. She called an air emergency service and arranged for an ambulance to be waiting on the tarmac when the plane landed. Whitman rode in the ambulance with the ill executive and stayed with him for hours in the hospital, talking to his wife on the phone. Once the executive was stabilised Whitman took him to a hospital in London in the corporate jet." (Brown, 2007). This type of personal touch in leadership goes a long way in building the charismatic reputation.

As Whitman built her charismatic reputation through hands-on effort, she, did not bring a natural charisma to the table. In terms of personal style, Whitman has had to evolve in that area. In 2004 Whitman was described as "frumpy, but she delivers." (Sellers & Shambora,

2009). As she moved up the ladder in the corporate world, she had relied on actual performance more than any natural charismatic presence. When she ran for Governor of California in 2010, she had to rely on friends and supporters to help re-craft her style in order to help match her performance charisma with a blend of natural charismatic presence often required of politicians (Sellers & Shambora, 2009). While she did not succeed in winning the election, she did make advancements toward matching her reputation as a charismatic leader with a more stylised look. (Sellers & Shambora, 2009)

Today, as CEO of the fifteenth largest company in the Fortune 500, Whitman has faced some challenges in turning around the computer hardware behemoth. However, she is still in high demand as a speaker at a variety of events. Audiences are anxious to hear her stories of leadership success in the business world and how she managed to have such a storied career in an often male dominated world. Her leadership narrative, which is so important in building charisma, especially when one may not have the natural physical characteristics associated with popular charisma, was one centered on hands on, authentic leadership. "Whitman is a perfect example of an authentic leader who helped to build a company and culture that transcends her humanity by being approachable, honest, attuned to the environment, and responsive to individuals' and the organisation's needs beyond her personal ambitions." (Walumbwa, *et al.*, 2011). Whitman proves that when your reputation precedes you, people are very willing to listen to what you have to say.

Indra Nooyi

Unlike the other charismatic leaders mentioned here, Indra Nooyi was born, raised and initially educated outside the United States receiving an undergraduate degree in Physics, Chemistry and Mathematics from Madras Christian College, Madras, India, and a post graduate diploma in Management from the Indian Institute of Management in Calcutta (Nooyi, 2006). In the late 1970s, Nooyi moved to the United States to attend graduate school at Yale University where she received her Master of Business Administration in 1980 (Nooyi, 2006). Following graduation from Yale and similar to the career path of Meg Whitman, Nooyi sought the strategic route, working first with Boston Consulting Group and

later with Motorola and Asea Brown Boveri, one of the largest engineering conglomerates in the world (Nooyi, 2006).

In 1994, she joined PepsiCo as the company's chief strategist. In this role she facilitated some key decisions, namely among them, moving PepsiCo out of the fast food business spinning off Kentucky Fried Chicken, Pizza Hut and Taco Bell into Yum Brands (Useem, 2008). In place of the fast food segment, Nooyi spearheaded PepsiCo's expansion in the beverage market with two key acquisitions of Tropicana, manufacturer of juice and related products and Quaker Oats, the makers of Gatorade (Useem, 2008).

It was not long after the success of these two strategic moves began to be realised, that Nooyi continued her rise at PepsiCo becoming CFO and eventually being named CEO in 2006 (Juergan, 2012). It was in the CEO position that Nooyi garnered international attention as one of the top female business leaders in the world (Juergan, 2012). She continued to transform PepsiCo into new areas by expanding the company's menu of health-conscious products (UCLA, 2010). Combining her strategic experience with her understanding of the importance of communication, Nooyi spread her message with the slogan "Performance with purpose." The "Performance with Purpose" slogan represented the new ambition of PepsiCo to not only increase offerings in healthier foods but to also deliver products internationally based on local tastes and preferences of specific markets (UCLA, 2010). The new strategy also centered on "finding innovative ways to reduce operating costs and minimize its impact on the environment by conserving energy and water and reducing packaging volume; providing a diverse and inclusive workplace for associates and attracting top talent to the company; and playing a positive role in the local communities where the company operates." (UCLA, 2010). "It doesn't mean subtracting from the bottom line," she explained in a 2007 speech, but rather "that we bring together what is good for business with what is good for the world." (Useem, 2008).

As seen with the other examples of charismatic leadership, communication is a vital aspect of building charisma. A reputation as a charismatic leader is given to those who are able to bring a message to all stakeholders in the endeavor. The ability to set forth strategic direction is only one component, Nooyi, like the other charismatic

leaders described in this article, had a gift for selling the message. “A key part of strategy is communicating it. Communications is key to operations and execution and an integral part of the process.” PepsiCo president and CFO, Indra Nooyi puts it cogently: “You only have to go through one or two communications debacles as a senior executive to understand the importance of communications.” (Argenti, 2005). Nooyi has been part evangelist as well, selling the message of the company but also selling a certain level of autonomy for each employee (Tischler, 2013). As she describes in a 2008 interview, “I believe that each one of PepsiCo’s 185,000 employees is a leader. There are two reasons for this. First, PepsiCo is a meritocracy. Hard work gets recognised. Second, PepsiCo has an entrepreneurial culture, so people have the ability to take the initiative to develop good ideas.” (Bingham, 2008).

As CEO of Pepsico, Nooyi has received numerous accolades and honors, joining lists naming the most powerful women in business. Like Meg Whitman, Nooyi, as a female business leader, has had to rely on successful decisions in order to build her reputation as a charismatic leader. In a recent article published in *Organizational Dynamics*, the link between realised success and reputation for female executives is significant. The authors write: “Prominent leaders like Indra Nooyi and Irene Rosenfeld (Kraft) need to be seen as successful in order to effectively fulfill their function as role models.” (Toh & Leonardelli, 2013). While certainly some natural born features of perceived charismatic leadership, such as height or looks, are beneficial for men or women, it seems that women still have something to prove first before the reputation as a charismatic leader is bestowed upon them. There is little substitute for success. “It has been demonstrated repeatedly that people in leadership positions are seen as more leader-like when their team or organisation succeeds than fails. Such a coupling of women leadership and success can be powerful.” (Toh & Leonardelli, 2013).

Nooyi was recognised by the University of California at Los Angeles with the John Wooden Global Leadership Award in 2010, joining other notables such as Starbucks CEO Howard Schultz and FedEx CEO Frederick Smith. The Press Release announcing her selection described both her success at PepsiCo as well as her influence on the global business community. “Indra Nooyi’s leadership and vision go well beyond building a successful global corporation. She also inspires as a positive influence of

business on the world. Under Indra’s direction, PepsiCo has achieved strong business results, while also creating a foundation for long-term growth with thoughtful initiatives that are ‘good’ for the planet.” (UCLA, 2010).

While Nooyi continues to find some critics quick to comment on her record as CEO of PepsiCo in terms of financial performance (Useem, 2008), a list of worldwide accolades has brought Indra Nooyi to the pinnacle of leadership. The fact that she is a non-western woman in a global leadership position has provided a wide variety of platforms to speak on leadership issues. Often described as a charismatic leader (Bingham, 2008), Nooyi continues to deliver the message of hard work, the importance of communication and an entrepreneurial outlook. As she has solidified her position on the global business stage, she is sure to remain in demand as a speaker well into the future.

Conclusion

While current research on the link between charisma and business communication is limited in volume and in scope, the hypothesis that charisma impacts the effectiveness of business communication cannot be overlooked. The reasons why these selected four business leaders are often described in charismatic terms often relate back to their ability to deliver a message. Other personal attributes are important in developing leadership reputations, but it is difficult to name a charismatic leader who is weak in communication skills. Certainly each of the four leaders could be measured at the high end of intellectual capability with three out of the four holding graduate degrees (Jobs being the only one that did not complete an undergraduate degree), however, it can be supported that their skill at communicating specific messages to their constituents is what really made the difference in building their charismatic reputations. In an article published in *Personnel Psychology* in 2010, the authors of *Visionary Communication Qualities as Mediators of the Relationship between Narcissism and Attributions of Leader Charisma*, define the importance of business communication in terms of spreading vision and optimism. As they write: “Attributions of leader charisma are also likely to be enhanced by bold visions that communicate optimism, build confidence, clarify the future direction of the organisation, and energize others.” (Galvin, 2010).

Just as a strong link exists between communication effectiveness and perceived leader charisma there is also a strong tie between charisma and performance since

“individuals who view a leader as charismatic will see the leader in a positive light and will be willing to engage in behaviours in support of the leader and the leader’s vision, resulting in improved organisational performance.” (Galvin, 2010). A common thread in the four charismatic leaders profiled in this article reflects a reputation built on success as well as an ability to construct a proper narrative. Like a number of charismatic leaders before them, they were able to sell a certain narrative to their company’s constituents which, when combined with successful results, created significant charismatic reputation. From Steve Jobs’ ability to construct and choreograph elaborate announcements to Indra Nooyi and her “Performance with Purpose” evangelism, these leaders were very effective at leveraging an optimistic narrative for their respective organisations. These leaders solidified their own reputations and expanded their popularity on the lecture circuit by keeping to their associated narrative: Steve Jobs (corporate visionary), Jamie Dimon (corporate saviour), Meg Whitman (corporate strategist), and Indra Nooyi (corporate evangelist). Audiences learned what to expect from each leader and were not disappointed. Each in their own way, were inspirations to their company stakeholders through that consistent narrative. “This paradigm emphasizes how exceptionally effective leaders communicate and interact with others in a manner that inspires them to higher levels of performance and commitment to the leader and/or organisation.” (Galvin, 2010). Apparently, people want to be inspired and the ability to communicate while backing up those words with success is exactly the form of inspiration that employees and other constituents’ desire.

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