

Leadership and storytelling

John Sadowsky |

- Distinguished Professor : Grenoble Ecole de Management
- Author of business books (leadership – branding)
- Former CEO, current board member
- Self-expression for leaders and brands
- Building high-performance teams

Website: www.johnsadowsky.com

1. My journey: What do effective leaders have in common?
2. Several myths and realities about leadership
3. The role of storytelling in leadership



“Leadership is one of the most observed and least understood phenomena on earth.”

--James McGregor Burns

The leadership “crisis”

How is this possible?

What do leaders have in common?

traits

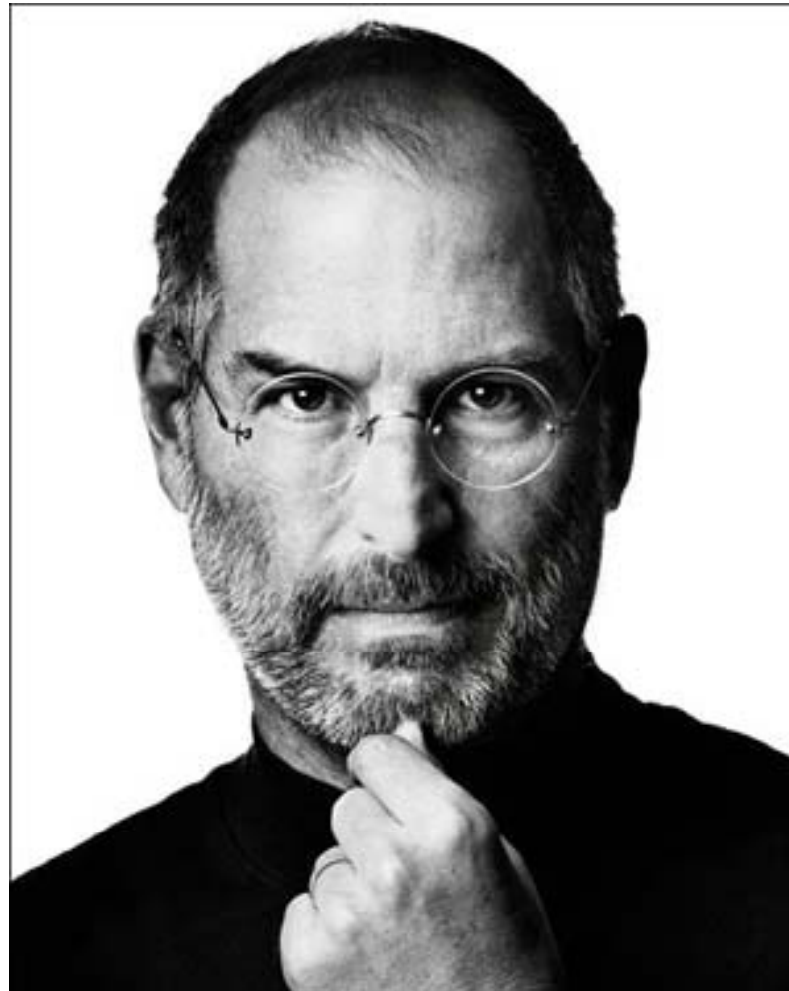
behaviors

characteristics

personality

style?

what I discovered in my quest...

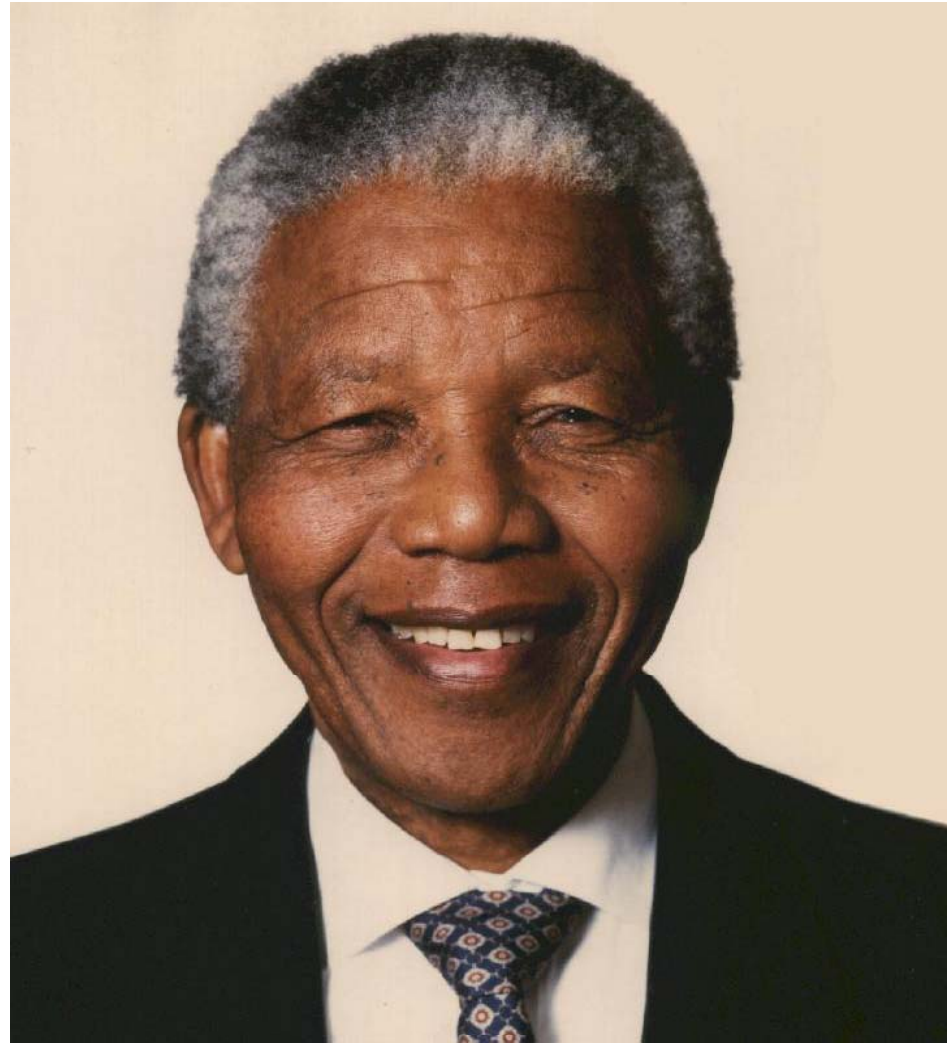


Bennis & Nanus, *Leaders: the strategies for taking charge*

“Our leaders (the 90 highly effective ones they identified and studied) were all ‘too human’; they were short and tall, articulate and inarticulate, dressed for success and dressed for failure, and there was virtually nothing in terms of physical appearance, personality or style that set them apart from their followers...

They were certainly not heroes in the traditional sense.”

The extraordinary experience myth



Noel Tichy, *The Leadership engine*

"Everyone has a usable past: leaders just use theirs better. Leaders recognize the defining moments in their lives, and they communicate the lessons through words and actions."

Leaders are born

Some people are “natural” leaders

The “gifted” myth



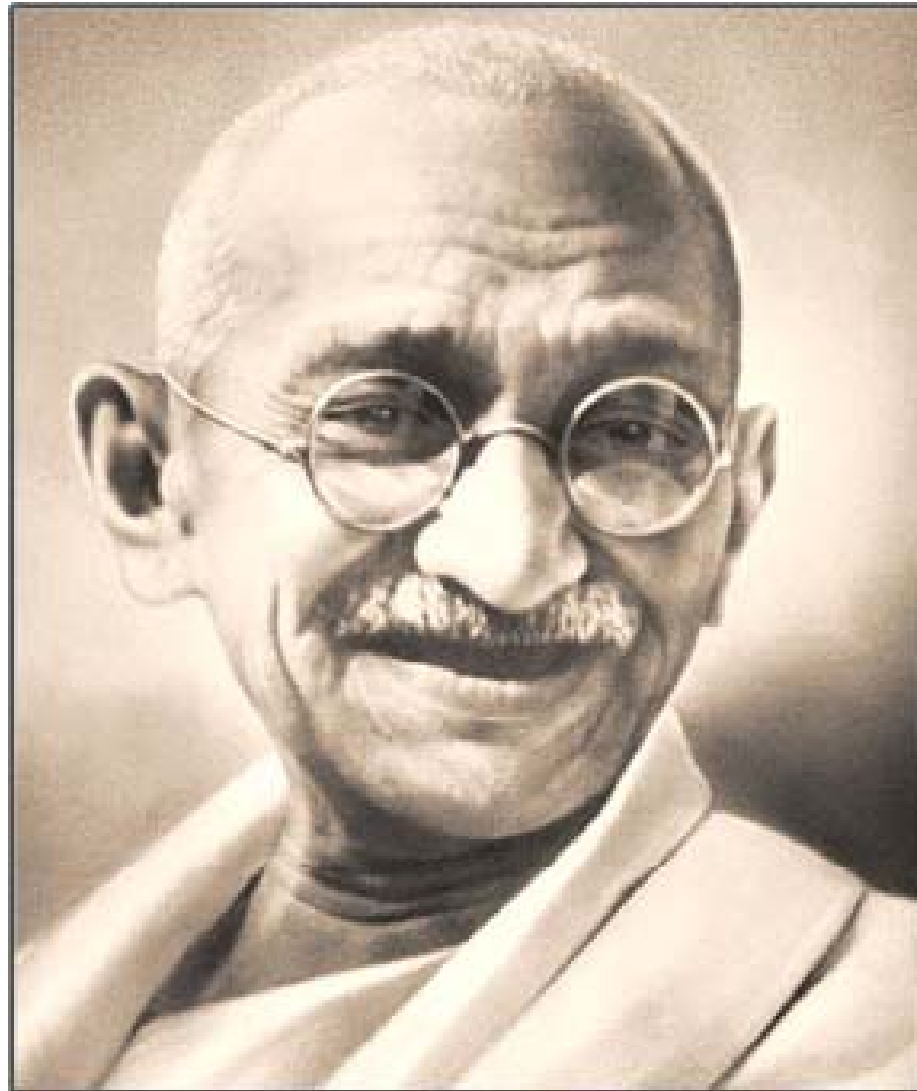
John Kotter, *Leading Change*

“The single biggest error in the traditional model is related to its assumptions about the origins of leadership.

Stated simply, the historically dominant concept takes leadership skills as a divine gift of birth, a gift granted to a small number of people.

Although I, too, once believed this, I have found that the traditional idea simply does not fit well with what I have observed in nearly thirty years of studying organizations and the people who run them”

The “charisma” myth



Where does charisma come from?
(society has it backwards)

Charisma comes from passion

Leadership passion leads to charisma,
not the other way around

Porras et al., *Success built to last*

“All started out ordinary. Their lives are characterized by a compelling personal commitment to something they truly care about.

They show their passion in different ways that give them charisma, regardless of personality. They have found something that truly matters to them, and they rise above the personality baggage that holds most people back.

Some are painfully shy, and some are overpowering... Whatever they are doing has so much meaning to them that the cause itself provides charisma, and they plug into the cause as if plugged into an electrical current.”

Why do these myths persist?

Are they simply “convenient”?

Are they our excuse for
not taking responsibility?

Perhaps we focus on the wrong things

Not styles or behaviors or gifts

Character and authenticity

What if leadership is not about:
hierarchical position or power?
extraordinary experience?
charisma?
divine gifts?
or heroism?

Then, what is it about?

At the most basic level, leadership
is about influence

And there are many ways to
influence your world

How do leaders influence?

In studying this question for a long time, I came up with something of a pattern.

Leadership starts with self-knowledge



Clarity about :

Who I am

What I believe

Why I do what I do

What I stand for

A decision to take a stand
for something that matters to you

Leadership is a decision



Leadership takes courage



Where does courage come from?

Leaders take stands about things that
truly matter to them

Leaders build trust by revealing
something of themselves

And...they reveal themselves in their
personal stories of identity

Leaders lead by autobiography



They engage others with their
stories of identity

Short example of a personal story



In general,
why do we follow someone?

Leaders embody their story



Can we teach and learn these things?

How do we “coach” character and authenticity?

We learn to be ourselves and tell our story!

It begins with the inner journey to self-
knowledge

...and continues with the journey outward to
self-expression

www.johnsadowsky.com