

# PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

## Developing Charisma

By Lawrence Kohn and Robert Kohn

Charisma is a valuable quality. As a leader or business developer, you inspire and influence people with the help of charisma. It helps you to create a strong bond and engender loyalty and support. And, while some people come by it naturally, we have seen time and again that it is a skill that can be learned.

To improve charisma, it is helpful to define it. For starters, charisma is in the eyes of the beholder, so each individual decides who is charismatic. According to sources from Webster's to Wikipedia, charisma contains a variety of characteristics including a profound respect, a magical quality of charm, eloquence, an ability to inspire devotion, and many more. One conclusion we have made is that charisma is the result of a combination of qualities. This combination creates an experience that is greater than the sum of its parts.

### HOW TO GAIN CHARISMA

So how do you learn to deliver this powerful combination? One thing you can do to is to start documenting the qualities that you observe that are charismatic in others. You can also document the characteristics that you already display — that you feel are seen as charismatic.

#### **Improve Your Communication Skills**

As you identify the charismatic characteristics, the next step is to improve the communication skills that most effectively reveal them. We have identified four communication skills that will help.

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**Lawrence Kohn and Robert Kohn** are principals in Kohn Communications. The firm has been coaching lawyers in business development and client relations since 1983. They can be reached at [www.kohncommunications.com](http://www.kohncommunications.com).

**1. Genuine Concern.** One communication skill is demonstrating a genuine concern for the well-being of your targets. Demonstrating a genuine concern promotes trust. Telling people that you are concerned about them may be enough. And if you are telling the truth, there is a good chance you will be believable. Talking about the things that you have done, or will do, that are in their best interests may demonstrate a real concern for well-being. Understanding their needs demonstrates concern. Of course, the best thing you can do is deliver benefits on the spot. Giving helpful advice demonstrates an interest in their well-being.

**2. Instilling Hope.** Another communication skill is instilling hope for a better future. This skill comes from knowing what steps to take in order to overcome obstacles and achieve goals. By helping your targets see a clear pathway to their goals, you instill hope.

**3. Clarity.** A third communication skill is clarity. While clarity often reveals itself in good diction, more important is a good choice of words that get to the point quickly and accurately. This may require planning. You may know people who are naturally charismatic in their ability to saying the right words in the moment without planning. These are the people who create the impression that charisma is a genetic quality. But just because there are some people who can be spontaneously accurate does not mean that planned accuracy is any less charismatic.

Accurate communication is a process of finding the right words that clearly state your understanding of a problem and your ideas for overcoming obstacles and achieving goals. Write down your statements and re-read them many times. Have others review your statements until you find the exact words that quickly get to the point. Once you have the right words, your statements will ring true. Your message will be powerful and help you to connect with your audience.

**4. Confidence.** The fourth communication skill is demonstrating

confidence. This happens when your communication is delivered without apology or qualification. It need not be loud — only stated with conviction. This, of course, is easier when you actually are certain. We have found that confidence increases the more you become genuinely convinced that your message communicates great value to your targets. A great exercise is to write down all the reasons your message is not only correct, but also why it is valuable to your listeners. But even when you are certain, it is easy to fall into old communication habits of caution and self-deprecation that come across as a lack of confidence.

### CONFLICTS AND OBSTACLES

As you focus on the preceding skills, you are more likely to be seen as charismatic, but there are obstacles to consider. You may fail to use your communication skills due to an inability to reconcile what appear to be conflicting forces.

One significant conflict is the desire to appear humble juxtaposed with the desire to reveal your exceptional qualities. The solution is found in the accuracy with which you communicate your ability to be of service. If you overstate your abilities, it may be perceived as bragging. Conversely, if you understate your ability, you won't be perceived as charismatic. The way to overcome the fear of bragging is to develop a deep understanding of exactly how you are able to provide benefits. As you understand the benefits you offer, you will be able to reveal them precisely and subsequently, without fear.

Another conflict that needs to be reconciled is the desire to demonstrate a sincere interest in supporting the well being of your targets compared with the desire to pursue your own self-interest. The solution is the realization that the more you help others, the less they care that you are benefitting as well. Most likely, none of your targets expect you to help them for nothing. In fact, the idea that you have no personal motive would probably make them suspicious. So you need to reveal

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how your interests are being served. If your target is compensating you, you must show that he or she is getting a lot of value for their money. If you can demonstrate that you are receiving benefits from sources other than your targets, all the better.

Another obstacle to revealing your charisma is forgetting to use

your communication skills. If you're not naturally charismatic, you need systems to remind you to prepare. A Post-It note on your computer screen is a good reminder. Another reminder is to write the word "Charisma" in your calendar when you make an appointment. Before each interaction, think about the needs of your targets so you can show them that you sincerely care about them. You need to be clear about the rea-

sonable steps they need to take to so they can feel hopeful. You need to think about the exact words that you will use to communicate clearly exactly what they need to hear. You need to be absolutely certain that you believe in your content so you can deliver it with confidence. When you remember, you can assemble and deliver the qualities that make you charismatic.

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