

Purpose: To articulate the real work of leaders – how they shape their communities through Advocacy and personal example.

Intended Outcome: Increase your ability to effectively appraise what is worthy of Advocacy and your skills to mobilize others.

Defined, the noun Advocacy means “to call” as in “to call a witness” or “to call for something that’s needed.” Advocacy relates to the idea of voice (Latin-vocem), as in using our voice. So when we talk about Advocacy, we mean the feeling of being called toward something of importance and using our voices to bring attention to it or generate some sort of response. In the context of leadership, Advocacy is the capacity of leaders to shape the agenda of their communities through sponsoring others and by personal example. A leader’s capacity for advocacy predicts how compelling he or she will be. Where authenticity and purpose are largely internal and do not necessarily involve other people, advocacy broadens the borders of a person’s private self to begin shaping the agenda of the larger community by influencing the people around you. Potential subjects of Advocacy include people, products & services, ideas, and dialogue.

Advocacy Principles – How to Build a Strong Advocacy Platform

1. Clarity – An effective advocate clearly understands and can articulate the purpose of their platform, the outcomes they hope to achieve through Advocacy, and the methods they will employ to connect the purpose to the outcomes. Achieving clarity requires time and effort, but will better equip you to handle resistance.

2. Conviction – An effective advocate believes so strongly in their platform that their mind is made up without necessitating the approval or support of anyone else. True conviction cannot be faked and can be a powerfully compelling tool to gain support. Conviction can be measured in degrees of intensity, with each level representing the amount of personal investment someone is willing to make when advocating for a cause:

1. Superficial: Words that lack corresponding action; leaders who do not walk the talk.
2. Comfort: Risking one’s own comfort in order to advocate on behalf of something; “going out of your way” for something
3. Safety: Risking one’s own well being (physical safety, job security, etc.); “stick your neck out” for something
4. Survival: Risking one’s own life in support of a belief or cause; “to go down with the ship”

3. Credibility – An effective advocate gains credibility in direct proportion to their amount of clarity and conviction. Credibility is important because it determines how other people receive what a leader says and whether they view it as trustworthy. There are four ways in which people assess credibility:

1. Credentials: Education degrees and professional certifications that indicate successful completion of a course of study.
2. Associations: Having connections to reputable people or organizations.
3. Essential Understanding: The ability to demonstrate a grasp of the critical issues. Think of a person who may not have initially appeared to be an “expert” but their ability to understand the issue increased their credibility.
4. Actionable Insight: The ability to realize and suggest a productive course of action after understanding the issue.

4. Compelling Case – An effective advocate is able to transfer their level of conviction to others. Presenting a compelling case involves identifying true convictions and presenting them in a way that compels others to action. Advocates can present a compelling case in the following ways:

1. Reason: Provide a logical and reasonable argument
2. Research: Back up the argument with relevant data and statistics
3. Resonance: Appeal to emotions by making the argument relevant
4. Reframing: Present the argument in a new light to provide a fresh perspective
5. Real World Events: Highlight what’s happening in the real world to increase the relevancy of the case

Advocacy Inhibitors

- 1. Poor listening** – Not taking the time to listen to the needs and concerns of the community will leave a leader out of touch and clueless, making it almost impossible for them to be effective advocates.
- 2. Overextension** – Leaders who find themselves advocating too many issues will find they are less effective in their ability to incite people to action.
- 3. Lack of Preparation** - Without taking the time to understand the issue, reflect on the purpose, and consider the options for action, a leader will be a much less effective advocate.

Prompts

1. Think of a time when you encountered a leader so proficient in Advocacy that they were able to win you over to their cause. What kind of qualities did they have that made them such effective advocates?
2. What do you think are some of the main roadblocks that prevent people from exercising Advocacy when they wish to champion a cause or idea? What strategies can be used to get past them?