



Advocacy

Declaring What Matters

Chapter 2: Advocacy

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1 Purpose & Outcomes

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 skill to mobilize others.

“If you expect those below to support your leadership and step in the breach when needed, they will need to understand your strategy, your methods, and your rules. That requires repeated restatements of your principles and consistent adherence to them.” Michael Useem, author of *Leading Up*

2 Self Assessment

*Please rate yourself for each of the following items on the 1-7 scale (1=no, 7=yes) **before** reading the chapter.*

1. I am fully aware of my level of potential to influence those around me.



2. I have clarified for myself the issues that are most important to me and their level of priority.



3. I skillfully leverage my influence to advocate for those causes I deem important.



4. Before exerting leadership for my important issues, I thoughtfully plan my approach.



5. I view obstacles and resistance from others as opportunities to learn and adjust.



6. The leaders of my community practice what they preach (i.e. mission and values).



7. I encourage others to identify and advocate for the concerns that are important to them.



3 Advocacy Defined

The noun form, Advocacy, means “to call” as in “call a witness” or “call for something that’s needed.” Advocacy relates to the idea of voice (Latin-*vocem*), as in using our voice. From this, we get that sense that Advocacy originated to call people toward something of importance.

While we may not be aware of it, we advocate for things all the time. We give advice to a friend. We share something we heard in the news. A great deal of our daily communication is a form of Advocacy. In fact, we unwittingly advocate for things through our behavior as well. We advocate company brands through what we buy, wear, or drive. We advocate values (or the lack of them) through the things we say and do. On your way to work, you will see all kinds of bumper stickers that advocate for a certain activity (i.e. running) or for a particular breed of dog, an alma mater, a politician, a product. We may write an online review for a restaurant or product because we want others to experience the benefits we derived or avoid the negative experiences we suffered. We even advocate the Advocacy of others when asked to upvote or downvote an online review or comment.

Not all Advocacy is equally warranted or effective. We know from experience that if somebody fails to present their viewpoints clearly, the force of their Advocacy suffers. If the Advocacy strikes us as mean spirited, illogical or poorly worded, we are less inclined to adopt the advocate’s view. If we question the advocate’s motives (i.e. he/she has something to personally gain), we remain skeptical. This is why paid advertisements are less reliable than a product review. Movie trailers, for example, are meant to entice movie-goers by portraying the best aspects of the film, but websites like RottenTomatoes.com provide much more compelling cases for whether a movie is worth seeing by aggregating ratings from viewers and critics. In other words, there are many factors that lead to successful Advocacy.

Advocacy is one of the most essential actions that evoke reactions from others and it is a primary strategy for mobilizing communities beyond survival and toward thriving. In the context of leadership, it’s surprising that the capacity for Advocacy is not discussed more often. Perhaps we fail to consciously associate Advocacy with leadership or we have come to take it for granted, assuming that people are naturally capable of effective Advocacy. Maybe it’s because the work of Advocacy can be uncomfortable and, at times, risky. Or, it could be that we simply don’t understand the nature and dynamics of Advocacy well enough.

The reason we use the term “capacity” to describe the seven aspects of Positive Leadership is that a capacity can be increased. The more we increase it, the greater our ability to deploy social force. The more skillfully we advocate, the greater our social force and we *can* increase our capacity as advocates. As with each capacity, everyone has the power to advocate—the ability to hold something up to the world as important. What is sorely missing is not the potential to advocate for something or someone, but the purposeful intent to advocate and the skills to do it effectively. We all have the ability, but do we maximize our social force to make a difference? Or do we miss opportunities to make valuable contributions?

Advocacy requires us to step apart from the crowd. In doing so, this can also increase our vulnerability. Inherent to Advocacy is the call for change—the need to do something differently, stop doing it altogether, or start doing something new. Machiavelli perfectly articulates the precarious nature of Advocacy: “It must be remembered that there is nothing more difficult to plan, more doubtful of success, nor more dangerous to manage than a new system. For the initiator has the enmity of all who would profit by the preservation of the old institution and merely lukewarm defenders in those who gain by the new ones.”

Leaders advocate

Advocacy is a crucial part of charting a community’s direction. When we advocate for something or someone, we direct community members’ attention and harness the social force available to affect change. Since a community’s survival and ability to thrive rests largely on the effectiveness of its leaders ability to advocate, it is a significant capacity to develop. What are some of the qualities of an effective advocate? Consider the following:

1. They have clarity. They know what they are trying to accomplish and can articulate it clearly for others.
2. They have conviction. Doubts and fears take a backseat to a worthy purpose.
3. They provide compelling rationale. The recommended course is presented thoughtfully and convincingly.
4. They have a specific focus. The attention they command is directed toward the most important things.
5. They inspire other advocates. Their passion and intensity is transferred to others.
6. They anticipate sources of resistance and address them rather than avoid them.
7. They are the right person for the message. If they are not, they identify the right source to deliver the message.

4 Advocacy and Leadership

Advocacy is rooted in the idea of change. This connection may not be immediately apparent. I don't mean change for the sake of change, but change when it is necessary for a community's survival and thriving. The environment you are in will not allow your community to stay the same no matter how good things may seem at the moment. Eventually, change is necessary. Threats to survival will emerge: new competitors, advances in technology, changing markets, outdated policies, etc. If someone does not recognize the need for change it puts the community in peril, and the first job of a leader is to protect the community. If the community dies, it is the fault of leaders. For example, if a non-profit closes its doors, then leadership (or the lack of it) is to blame. There may be reasonable excuses for such failures but the ultimate responsibility rests with leaders.

Advocating must be rooted in necessary change. Some people advocate for other reasons: to leave their mark, put a notch in their belt, personal gain, politics, fear, or to showcase their intelligence. In other words, ego-driven change instead of need-driven, which can look like Advocacy but it is not. The heart of Advocacy is recognizing a true need, making the case, and bringing others along. There are many variables that can make this easier or more difficult. The variable we are going to focus on is leadership.

Authenticity and Purpose support Advocacy



As we discussed under the first capacity, authentic leaders take an honest accounting of who they are— their strengths and weaknesses, virtues and vices, base hungers, and noble aspirations. Authenticity bolsters Advocacy when leaders know who they are, accept themselves, set an internal benchmark for their development, and effectively assert themselves.

“Authentic leaders in every setting—from families to nation states—aim at liberating the heart, their own and others’, so that its powers can liberate the world.” Parker Palmer

Purpose, the second capacity, provides not only a powerful starting place for leaders, but also a reliable guide along the way as complexities mount. You can enhance your ability to advocate by connecting to a worthy purpose. Where Authenticity and Purpose are largely internal (they do not necessarily involve other people), Advocacy influences others and is, by necessity, external. Authenticity and Purpose provide the internal base. Advocacy expands your reach outwardly into your community. The stronger the base, the greater the social force that propels your Advocacy forward.

Leaders can be authentic and purposeful yet still not fully realize the potential social force of Positive Leadership in their communities. Community members take their cues from their leaders. Advocacy broadens the borders of a person's private self to begin shaping the agenda of the larger community. When you advocate, you extend beyond yourself to actively influence affairs around you. **Of all seven capacities, Advocacy is most pointedly linked to the deployment of leadership; turning social force into social action.**

When you hold up an ideal to the rest of the world and say, "This matters!" you shape your communities. This is what it means to be an advocate. One example that comes to mind is that of a senior executive at IBM who recently started the "Slow Email Movement." He concludes his emails with the message that employees should check their email only twice a day (instead of constantly) so they can relearn the lost arts of dreaming, relaxing, and focusing. In so doing, this executive is advocating a more deliberate pace of work—one based on being proactive rather than reactive.

Bob Barker provides another example of Advocacy. He ended each episode of *The Price is Right* with a reminder for people to spay and neuter their pets. He used his platform for a message important to him: the reduction of homeless or unwanted pets and the reduction of suffering they endure.

A friend of mine works for a small company where the CEO advocates for family and wellness. He allows three months of paid maternity leave for women with newborns to allow them the space to manage parenthood and work. He also has made sure that a couple of employees who developed substance abuse did not have to worry about the cost of rehabilitation or whether they would have a job when they returned. These are ways he advocates for values that are important to him.

One example of Advocacy that I found particularly moving is that of Marla Ruzicka. Marla was a 28-year old Californian who became concerned about innocent victims of war. She went to Afghanistan and Iraq to go door to door in war torn areas to gather data and stories about those injured and killed. Along the way, she used her data to raise awareness and millions of dollars in funds. She arranged for medical services for people who suffered because they did not have a voice. On the way to visit one such victim, she and her translator were killed by a car bomb on April 16, 2005. Marla and the organization she formed called CIVIC (Campaign for Innocent Victims of Conflict) exemplify the epitome of Advocacy. Marla used her authentic talents, passions, and the privilege of being a United States citizen to advocate for dignity for those who had little power.

These examples may remind you of acts of Advocacy in your community. They abound. Advocacy comes in many sizes ranging from a single action (i.e. holding the door open as an act of civility) to a lifelong pursuit of changing a particular aspect of the human condition (i.e. civil rights, curing a disease, advancing technology, etc.). We also know that acts of Advocacy achieve varying degrees of success. Sometimes the most productive and creative people fail to have their ideas heard and sometimes those who have the least to offer occupy center stage. Advocacy is about substance and skill. Positive Leadership is concerned with possessing both.

Operators of Advocacy may be exactly right in what they advocate for yet fail to make a compelling case. This is exactly what happened in 1985 with the Challenger disaster. At least one expert closely associated with the project had strong concerns about the O-rings' stability under high temperature variance but failed to advocate for safety and stall the launch. Imagine being an engineer on the project and having special insights that led you to believe there was danger. Meanwhile, after months of preparation, hundreds of NASA employees and millions of dollars are at stake to make the launch happen. What would be your plan to slow down the momentum of an entire organization to take the time to hear your concerns? How would you hold up in the face of rabid resistance?

Many successful endeavors can be credited to the effective Advocacy of a few individuals. At the same time, how many disasters may have been averted but for the lack of someone to take a stand when they knew something wasn't right?

Technicians of social force are not only deliberate about what they choose to advocate for, but they employ the means to effectively influence others. And when they haven't succeeded in making their case, they understand resistance and know how to respond to it. Accurate situation assessment (clarity), personal investment (conviction), engaging others (credibility), and transferring your passion to others (compelling case) are four skills we will explore.

What can a leader advocate?

There are various potential subjects of Advocacy and below are some examples:

People: In the work environment, a promotion is really the Advocacy of an individual to higher levels of influence. Leaders have decided to invest more of their attention, resources, and reputation in the promoted person. In many 12-step programs, for example, the sponsor plays a critical role in advocating for an individual's recovery from addiction to alcohol, narcotics, gambling, etc. The sponsor/sponsee relationship is considered sacred in such circles and each of the roles is carefully spelled out. (*Twelve Step Sponsorship: How it Works* by Hamilton B). The sponsor is, in effect, saying, "This person is important. I believe in this person and am committed to his or her betterment." Any time you take an active interest in another's development, you are advocating for them.

Products & Services: Every organization offers some combination of products and services. I wish to make a distinction between Advocacy for the benefit of others and promotion for economic gain. The Advocacy I am defining here has little to do with economic gain as a primary consideration. Trumpeting the benefits of a product or service for financial enrichment is not, in my opinion, Advocacy. Instead, the spirit of advocating products and services is one of genuine concern for the well-being (survival and thriving) of the greater community. We see this in organizations that go the extra mile for quality and service. The Institute for One World Health is a non-profit pharmaceutical company with the purpose of bringing important drugs to the world's neediest people who could not otherwise afford them. They advocate health for people who lack wealth and privilege.

Many organizations advocate specific issues with some of their profits. Ben & Jerry's created an impressive program called PartnerShops. From their website, I include this description:

"Ben & Jerry's PartnerShop Program is a form of social enterprise, a growing movement in which nonprofit organizations leverage the power of business for community benefit. PartnerShops are Ben & Jerry's scoop shops that are independently owned and operated by community-based nonprofit organizations. Ben & Jerry's waives the standard franchise fees and provides additional support to help nonprofits operate strong businesses. PartnerShops offer supportive employment, job and entrepreneurial training to youth and young adults that may face barriers to employment. As PartnerShop operators, nonprofits retain their business proceeds to support their programs. PartnerShops help people build better lives."

Ideas: advocating for ideas is a less tangible, but important, avenue of Advocacy. I've heard it referred to as "thought leadership." Even in the most casual conversation between people, you can discern ideas that each person holds up as important. Pay attention to topics you think about and discuss to examine the ideas you support. This may also tell you a little about your personal purpose. What ideas are you are most passionate about?

Advocating for ideas for a community's betterment is a primary leadership role. Although we may not explicitly put it into words, we evaluate our leaders largely on the ideas they sponsor—a value, philosophy, prediction of emerging trends, a plan of action, etc. During election season, for example, voters evaluate candidates based on the issues and positions that they hold up as important.

Dialogue: Leaders advocate for open communication among community members. "Dialogos" is Latin for "flow of meaning." We all know what happens when people stop talking. Assumptions form, camps establish, conversation stops, and conflict ensues. I refer to situations like these as "drama bombs." Often a leader's most valuable role is to be a bomb defuser. Dialogue is one of the best tools for disarming drama bombs. Most people have had the experience of perceiving someone else as the enemy or bad guy only to find out later through open conversation that they had legitimate concerns. We know how distracting and draining drama bombs can be. Leaders that effectively advocate dialogue protect organizations from unnecessary tumult.

5 Advocacy Principles

Advocacy Platform

The movie Jerry MaGuire begins with the title character having a flash of insight for how to change the sports agent industry. He became fed up with the business aspect that makes sports all about money and he wanted to change it. He begins his monologue, “I hated myself. No, I hated my place in the world. I had so much to say and no one to listen. And then it happened...” He began drafting a memo to his co-workers that turned into a 25-page mission statement. “With so many clients we forgot what was important.” His solution: fewer clients, less focus on money, and build better quality relationships with clients. He titled it “The Things We Think But Do Not Say: The Future of Our Business” then printed copies and distributed them to everyone in his company. It is initially met with applause. Then, he is fired.

It’s not just a movie plot. In my home city of Tulsa, Carlton Pierson was one of the most prominent pastors in our community. He went from having a huge, thriving congregation to one that dwindled to a handful of parishioners that barely survived. The reason is that he had some personal revelations for how to re-interpret Christian teachings that were so vastly different from what he previously preached and, indeed, from how mainstream Christianity believes. The NPR show, This American Life (December 16, 2005), dedicated an entire show to his journey, one that is a harrowing account of failed Advocacy.

Jerry and Carlton serve as cautionary examples of the challenges of Advocacy. Whether it’s hubris or quixotic idealism, we can seduce ourselves with the notion of “If we build it they will come” Advocacy—when we share our brilliant idea, people will immediately rally to our cause. Successful Advocacy is a much more intricate complex of key factors. Combined, these factors comprise a platform.

Positive Leadership Advocacy Model

The mental image I have of Advocacy is a Roman orator standing upon a platform addressing a crowd. Ascending a platform places one person physically apart from the rest. From this elevated perch, a person can command the attention of others and, potentially, influence their views. This vaulted position also comes with the risks of resistance and rejection, for the higher we climb the further we may fall. To me, it matters a great deal why someone wants to command attention and it comes down to where they stand on the scale between personal gain vs. community service. It is the latter which qualifies as Positive Leadership.

Perhaps you see a need that is not being addressed but lack the formal authority to address it and all you have is a concern, observation, idea, or plan. Platforms are rarely a physical stage. They are most often moments—moments of accountability. These moments are opportunities to channel social force. Remember that social force is merely potential until it is channeled and, as with all seven capacities, the more you move from operator to technician you can maximize the potency of your social force.

We will explore four main components to build a stronger Advocacy platform:

1. Clarity
2. Conviction
3. Credibility
4. Compelling Case

1. Clarity

We have all experienced someone who thought they were being clear in their communication, but they really were not. This makes it very difficult to understand what they want and to provide it for them. This confusion is how a lack of clarity impedes leadership.

We often hear that “vision” is an important quality of leadership. We discussed vision in the previous chapter, but we used a different term: outcome—an image of a future state that would lead to something better. You hopefully recall that outcomes are an extension of Purpose. A vision (or outcomes) that are disjointed from Purpose can lead a community in the wrong direction. In other words, vision is not enough. Clarity also includes knowing why and being able to articulate the “why” to other people. There is a third component as well: methods. Methods articulate the path to get from Purpose to outcomes. The POM tool is a powerful way to achieve clarity. This is one reason Advocacy follows Purpose in Positive Leadership. Clarity on the Purpose, outcomes, and methods is the first building block of the Advocacy platform.



The clearer you are on your Purpose, outcomes, and methods, the greater your potential social force for triggering reactions from others. This is because of a well researched principle of human behavior known as “uncertainty reduction.” People do not like uncertainty and will go to great lengths to avoid it. The greater the uncertainty the greater the resistance. Therefore, the clearer you are on the Purpose, outcomes, and methods of what you advocate, the better equipped you are to reduce and handle resistance. Achieving clarity usually requires effort. Yes, there are moments when the path ahead comes to you in an instant. I’ve had problems for which the solution evaded me. Then, I wake up in the morning with perfect clarity for what needs to be done. The insight only seemed to come in a flash, but the truth is that I my mind was working through the problem all the while. Clarity is the result of effort. There are many planning models to aid in the process, but the one I prefer goes back to the time of Aristotle. It is known as the 5 Canons of Rhetoric:

1. Invention: The creative process of brainstorming the available means to advocate for the particular topic
2. Arrangement: Fine-tune the results of the brainstorming and assemble them into the most effective sequence
3. Style: Design your Advocacy so that it is most engaging using tools such as story, metaphor and examples
4. Memory: Prepare your Advocacy to maximize your presentation and minimize mistakes such as of stumbling or forgetting
5. Delivery: Effectively convey your thoughts in a way that ensures the best reception possible

*“You have enemies? Good. That means you’ve stood up for something, sometime in your life.”
Winston Churchill*

2. Conviction

I enjoy and recommend a podcast series called Start Up (www.hearstartup.com). It features NPR's Alex Bloomberg and follows his journey in launching a technology business. In one episode, Alex interviews one of the best known tech start up investors, Chris Sacca, an early investor in Twitter, Instagram, KickStarter, and Uber who developed a philosophy for successful investing. He looks at the fundamentals like evaluating the idea and looking at the numbers. But he also looks hard at the conviction of entrepreneurs. In Sacca's words "With the ideas and entrepreneurs we back, there is so much conviction about the inevitability of success it's contagious." Sacca describes what made him invest in Instagram after listening to the founder: "As you listen to him, you get the perception that he's actually looking through you to some spot behind you that's 5 years in the future and he just knows the inevitability of the success of his platform and by the end of the conversation I'm like 'Please, take my money.' What starts as this 'Alright, kid, what do you got' ends up with 'Wow, let me get on this thing. The train is leaving the station.'"

This is the power of conviction, the second building block of the Advocacy platform, and the description offers a profound insight. Conviction isn't looking at your audience with the hopes that they are buying into your views. They do not have the power over you or your ideas because you have decided. You are already convinced. You have conviction. You made the decision that you believe in something, that it will work, that you are moving in that direction with or without anyone's permission.

Here's the thing: conviction cannot be faked. Confidence can be, but conviction cannot. This is why clarity is so important. Lack of clarity means you can't look beyond your audience to 5 years in the future. Without clarity, you look to your audience for reassurance. With clarity and conviction, your audience looks to you for where to go.



Degrees of Conviction

If there was a lesson in school on how to gauge my level of conviction, I must have missed it. I had to devise my own way. There are varying degrees of conviction depending on how important something is and how invested we are willing to be. The purpose here is not place judgment (i.e. one level is inherently better than another), but rather to give you a gauge for assessing how far you are willing to go for the things you support. Conviction can be measured in degrees of intensity. Each level represents a level of personal investment you are willing to make in advocating for something.



Superficial Advocacy

The weakest form of Advocacy is words that lack corresponding action. Organizational psychologist Chris Argyris refers to “Espoused Theories” and “Theories in Use.” Essentially he’s referring to organizational leaders that do not walk the talk. We hear espoused theories such as, “Employees are our most important asset” and yet we find employees listed on the expense side of the balance sheet, not the asset side. We have seen examples of people in authority who espouse values for others to follow, then fail to adhere to those same values. We’ve seen educators who punish students for cheating but manufacture phony scores on standardized tests; clergy and politicians who espouse the sanctity of marriage then have affairs; and national security bureaucrats who talk about the need to gather personal data of citizens for safety but use data for personal agendas. To be clear, these are notable exceptions and not the norm. When we experience tension between the way things are and the way we believe they should be, the easiest and least risky attempt to close the gap is by offering words. Pious, well-meaning people feel the need to do something so they say things to sooth tension, but little else is done. Words without action is the weakest level of Advocacy. In many cases, words are better than silence in that they may provide catharsis or inspire someone else to take action. Beyond that, there is little value to superficial Advocacy when there is more that could be done in the face of real needs. As such, it is considered the feeblest deployment of social force.

Comfort

Beyond mere words, a person is convicted to the point of risking their comfort in order to advocate on behalf of something—whatever “uncomfortable” may mean for the person—physical, emotional, etc. This requires some measure of commitment because what most people seek is a sense of comfort. Perhaps there is someone you believe deserves recognition, but the efforts to make it happen would be uncomfortable. Most people have experienced a situation where they saw something was wrong and wanted to speak up but were afraid to look foolish or negative. Perhaps right now there is someone you believe is not performing up to expectations, but the discomfort of addressing the performance gap prevents you from doing so. Advocacy follows through with something you believe to be appropriate despite a measure of discomfort. When you see someone breaking an important policy you are stuck between the discomfort of risking that person’s wrath for reporting him and the resentment you feel because he took shortcuts that you would not personally take. Correcting a “superior” when she has erred would be another example. When you act as an advocate, you overcome that sense of discomfort because the person, cause or idea is more important to you. The phrase “going out of your way” would characterize this level of Advocacy.

Safety

The level beyond discomfort arises in situations where your well-being may be at risk. This requires courage. One story in the news several years ago exemplifies this. A black man and a white woman were driving their pickup truck in a rural area south of Tulsa. There was another pickup of white men behind them apparently driving in a threatening manner and yelling slurs of a racial nature to the man and woman. The couple pulled over at a gas station, seeking the safety of other witnesses. The men in the other truck began to physically assault the black man and none of the bystanders intervened, probably for fear of their own safety. A man pulling up to the scene saw the commotion and was not sure of the reason for the altercation but saw three men ganging up on one. He reached for a tire iron out of his truck and came to the man’s defense, dispersing the attackers. Here we see a contrast between the bystanders who were not willing to risk their comfort or safety to get involved and the one man who was. I recall from the article that his motivation was a sense of justice—which is the idea he was advocating through his actions, even though there was a possible threat to his own safety. Just because a person risks his or her well-being does not necessarily mean harm will come to pass. In the safety level, nobody can really be certain of the exact costs until after the event. Yet, there are some things for which people are willing to risk their safety and some things for which they are not. Safety could mean physical well-being, but it could also refer to other types of well-being: job security, risking an important relationship, increased stress, etc. What are some examples from your life when you have risked your safety on behalf of a cause or person? The expression that captures this level of Advocacy is a willingness to “stick your neck out.”

Survival

Beyond risking your safety, are there things you are willing to die for? To do so requires faith. One night while listening to the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), I heard an interview with Margaret Lukwiya. She was talking about her husband Matthew, one of Uganda's brightest young doctors. While 70% of Uganda's physicians leave to form lucrative practices elsewhere, Dr. Matthew stayed in his country to work in a war-torn region for 15 years. His work in the local hospital tripled the capacity of the hospital to 18,000 patients per year. In a nearby area, there was an Ebola outbreak—one of the deadliest diseases that's become well known with the latest outbreak. The survival rate is usually 10%, except in places where extreme care is available. Under Dr. Matthews' watch, there was a 50% recovery rate.

One evening, however, Dr. Matthew was called in to an Ebola patient in the throes of death. He donned all of the appropriate protective clothing, but in his haste to provide care he forgot to wear goggles. As a result, he contracted the fatal disease through his eyes and soon died. Dr. Matthew exemplified this extreme measure of Advocacy because he risked his survival for ideals of patient care and love of humanity. His is a story of heroism, perhaps the greatest level of attainment for any advocate. The expression that captures this level of Advocacy is a willingness "to go down with the ship."

Knowing our level of conviction (superficial, comfort, safety, and survival) is an important measure of one's Advocacy. It tells you, and others, ahead of time how far you are willing to go. Some things are worth a conversation and others are a "hill to die on."

"What you risk reveals what you value." Jeanette Winterson

3. Credibility

The greater your clarity and conviction, the more credible you will become. Credibility derives from the Latin *credo*, meaning to believe or trust. You are credible when people receive what you say without assessing your motives or capabilities. They accept your words and actions as trustworthy. Credibility is necessary to Advocacy because it shapes how you will be received. The stronger your credibility, the greater your social force. Authors Connolly and Rianoshek articulate four sources of credibility. The first two are immediately discernable, but may not be enduring. The second two are enduring, but may not be immediately discernable.



Four ways people assess credibility

1. *Credentials* are educational degrees and professional certifications you have earned that indicate successful completion of a course of study. When someone holds a doctoral degree, for example, we immediately recognize that person as having expertise. On the other side of the coin, someone may have a Ph.D. but behaves in ways that undermine his or her credibility. The advanced degree provided immediate credibility, but his or her conduct eroded it.

2. *Associations* with reputable people or organizations can create a “halo effect” where their prestige rubs off on others because of a previous affiliation they may have had. We may assume people are credible because they are associated with recognizable experts. As with credentials, associations can evoke immediate credibility, but may not endure. If one’s conduct does not match the reputation of those they associated with, they can quickly lose the credibility that came with that association.

3. *Essential Understanding* is the ability to demonstrate a grasp of critical issues. Think of a time that someone listened to you and really gave the sense they understood where you were from coming from. They may not be an expert in regards to your issue and if so, they did not have immediate credibility. But after talking with them, their empathy and ability to “get it” raised their credibility in your eyes.

4. *Actionable Insight* is a realization of productive courses of action. These insights are dependent upon gaining an *essential understanding*. Once a person orients accurately to your situation and they offer applicable suggestions, their credibility raises even higher. You may call on that person again for advice or seek their opinions on other topics because you have come to trust their judgment. We cannot immediately tell if someone is capable of producing actionable insight, but once we do, they gain enduring credibility.

For leaders, credibility is always in flux. While the first two pillars are important, they can only take you so far. If you do not have the right credential or association, the effort to obtain them may not be practical. *Essential understanding* and *actionable insight* are always available. They stem from skillful listening and demonstrating empathy.

| | IMMEDIATE BUT NOT ENDURING | ENDURING BUT NOT IMMEDIATE |
|----------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| CREDENTIALS | × | |
| ASSOCIATIONS | × | |
| ESSENTIAL UNDERSTANDING | | × |
| ACTIONABLE INSIGHT | | × |

4. Compelling Case

Presenting a compelling case is a critical aspect of Advocacy. A compelling case is about transferring one's level of conviction to others. I've met people who were terrific at selling a product or idea but they did not believe in it. I've also met people who had deep convictions but were not persuasive. What I am talking about here is the **ability to identify your true convictions and to present them in a way that compels others**. The mistake many leaders make is to assume that others will automatically feel the same conviction they feel. The truth about Advocacy is that we need to articulate convictions in a clear, compelling way. Let's explore some ways for a leader to create a compelling case.

Levers of Changing Minds

Howard Gardner's book, *Changing Minds*, explores how to advocate for a particular cause by building a compelling case. A mind change may appear to happen overnight, but in truth it's a slow process that occurs in stages. A common mistake leaders make is to naively assume they can step into the helm of a community and bring about sudden change. Often, they will meet with resistance and their ability to preempt and manage it is the hallmark of a potent leader. In affecting mind change, Gardner advocates several "levers" that leaders can access.

Reason (the 6th capacity of Positive Leadership): Leaders present a reasonable case for the objects of their Advocacy. Not everyone is persuaded by logic, but it's a crucial lever with which to begin.

Research: Leaders present relevant data to support their directions. If they want to advocate for a new product or service, showing the market research would help make a compelling case.

Resonance: Reason and research appeal to the mind, while resonance deals with the emotional component of changing minds. Leaders find messages that resonate with the community.

Reframing: Often people have situations framed in their mind in a particular way that suits them. Technicians of Advocacy are skilled at reframing issues that allow others to see things in a new light.



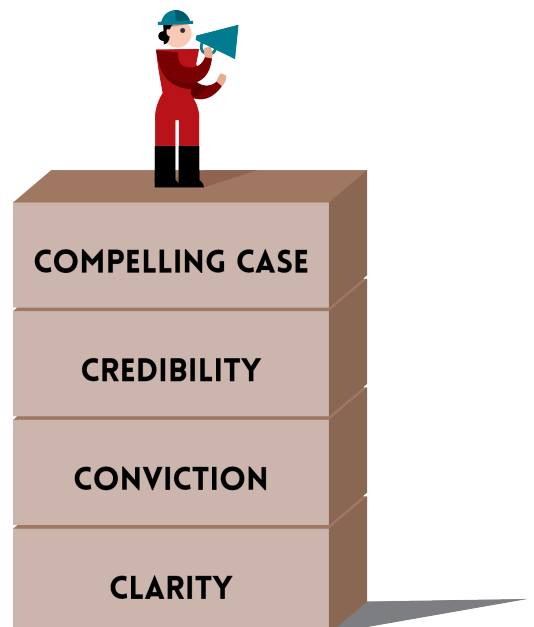
Real World Events: Sometimes a timely event helps make the case for a new direction. In the United States, the right to privacy is a sacred tradition. Several elements of the Patriot Act would not exist had the real world events of 9/11 not come to pass.

These short descriptions of the levers provide some direction for creating a compelling case. Technicians of Advocacy consider the array of methods available to them for handling a situation and choose the most appropriate fit.

Creating a compelling case often requires handling resistance. Connolly and Rianoshek define resistance in a particularly helpful way: It is the natural response people have when they do not perceive that their concerns and interests are represented in a course of action. Resistance is a natural byproduct of change. If a community does not feel like they will be better off for the things a leader advocates, they will not willingly go along. Leaders can preempt resistance by listening. In fact, Connolly and Rianoshek suggest that the antidote to resistance is research— finding out what concerns and interests are threatened by the advocated shift. Often what’s needed to successfully advocate for someone or something is a term that is becoming increasingly in vogue—“political will.” It describes the level of resolve a leader must have to make something happen. A leader often has resources that fall within their purview. Political will is the channeling of those resources to bring about a particular condition. The Commander-in-Chief has legal, monetary, and military powers concentrated under his control and should he choose to direct them in a particular direction, regardless of the level of popular support, he can do so if he has the political will. In any type of community, leaders have a similar ability to exercise political will. If they have the purpose and the resolve to see something happen, then it is an exercise in leadership to provide resources.

The building blocks of Advocacy

Here we see the four building blocks of Advocacy. It’s starts at the base with clarity. The clearer we are the more conviction we feel. Conviction does not guarantee others will find us credible. We need to understand and enhance our sources of credibility. However, we cannot expect others to act just because they may find us credible. We need to articulate a compelling case to get them to take action.



6 Advocacy Inhibitors

A few considerations about effectiveness

There are several threats to a leader's capacity for Advocacy, most of which are within the leader's control.

Poor Listening: Leaders that do not take the time to listen to the needs and concerns of their community may find the objects of their Advocacy are out of step. When a new initiative rolls out, employees often refer to them as “flavors of the month,” or they might say, “looks like someone read a book.” Clueless leaders decide to sponsor a program or policy that clashes with organizational realities. Employee input is not just a nicety—it's a necessity. I have come to believe that listening is more persuasive than speaking precisely because the objects of our advocacy are more informed and on target when we listen to the concerns, interests, and circumstances of those we lead.

Overextension: Sometimes capacity can be exceeded. When that happens, breakdown is eminent. Think of a balloon that is over-inflated. It will either pop or the pressure will cause it to rocket from your hands and sputter around the room. Leaders that advocate too many issues will find themselves less effective in their ability to successfully advocate important issues.

Lack of Preparation: Before advocating for a person, idea, direction, product, or dialogue, it is important to do a few preparatory steps. First, understand the issue and what's at stake. Then reflect upon the original, authentic, and situational purpose. Next, list the available options and consider the costs and benefits of each. Once you've settled on a solution, consider the best methods for implementing and communicating.

7 Expanding Advocacy

This is where you develop your personal capacity for Advocacy. As with all seven capacities, you have already developed your Advocacy to some degree. The activities listed in the Field Guide are resources for expanding your level of Advocacy. Take time to go to the Field Guide now and do a couple of the activities.

Over the next month you can focus on Advocacy by completing some of the activities in the Field Guide:

We suggest completing 3-5 of the Advocacy Field Guide exercises.

Observe your capacity for Advocacy by journaling or sharing (with at least one other person).

Developing Advocacy in others

An effective leader not only develops the capacity in himself or herself, but in others as well. Consider ways you can do the following:

Share the concepts you found valuable from this chapter with your staff, co-workers, etc.

Have your team members or family complete one, or more, of the exercises in the Field Guide and discuss with others.



8 Connecting Points

Authenticity: Advocacy provides a great test for Authenticity. You can know who you are and what you want, but find yourself in incompatible circumstances. You may face the choice of either muting or amplifying your Authenticity.

Purpose: Purpose helps you determine where to focus your Advocacy. Situations may demand acts of Advocacy to align your group to the job at hand. Purpose helps you determine the level of Advocacy you are willing to adopt.

Resilience: Resilience follows Advocacy because as the leader advocates for people, products/ services, ideas, mood, dialogue, etc., he or she may encounter resistance that can take quite a toll. In such times, the leader must draw from resources (internal and external) to maintain composure and stay focused.

Community-Building: The audience of things you advocate for is most often your community or segments of it. They take cues from you in terms of what's important and what needs to be done. Through your Advocacy, you have great potential to shape and build community.

Reason: Your Advocacy is shaped or hampered by aspects of reality you do or do not take into account. Sometimes the leader is the sole voice of reason in times of chaos and may need to advocate rationality when emotions run high.

Gratitude: Gratitude acknowledges the value of others and can set a mood. It is a profound mood shifter and one that leaders do well to advocate.