

EXECUTIVE BOOK SUMMARIES

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THE SUMMARY

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All leaders reach points in their careers when what is required to be most effective changes. This means not simply changes in the job description or the required tasks but when those around them—the team, the boss, the C-suite—expect something dramatically different. At such moments your technical skills—no matter how superior—will not be enough. You need to exude leadership presence as well.

Leadership presence is the ability to consistently and clearly articulate your value proposition while influencing and connecting with others. All technical capabilities being equal, presence is what sets true leaders apart.

Leaders operating at their best—where the substance of skills and the power of presence have come together—have *signature voice*, a unique leadership presence that is confident, authentic, and effective across a variety of situations and with diverse audiences. Like a signature, their presence is one that is recognizably unique and leaves a substantive impression on those around them and the organization itself. It takes this kind of presence to “own the room.”

This book is not only about improving your leadership presence on the surface. It’s about taking it deeper and finding your *signature voice*.

There are three myths about leadership presence:

Myth #1: You Are Who You Are. This is probably the most pernicious myth: presence is something you either have or you don’t. You are born with presence;

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you can't build it. In this book we will show you how anyone willing to do the work can have leadership presence.

Myth #2: One Size Fits All. This myth is the opposite of the first. Instead of resigning themselves to be who they are and giving up on the prospect of change, leaders try to alter their presence to emulate someone else. They believe they have to look and act a certain way to get promoted or rewarded. When we work with leaders, we always start with this supposition: *your presence is unique to you.* You can find presence that lets you be who you are and allows you to make an organizational impact in a way that is distinctly your own.

Myth #3: If It Ain't Broke, Don't Fix It. This myth maintains that, if you've established your leadership presence, you'll sail through the transitions ahead. Once you have it, it's yours to keep and there's no need to even tweak it. In reality, however, an effective leadership presence is dynamic. When you progress to higher levels of an organization, what is expected of you changes, and you must adapt your presence accordingly.

Leadership presence requires alignment between your mind, body, and words. Your presence is an interconnected system of your beliefs and assumptions, your communication skills, and your physical energy. You cannot address each separately, or you won't see consistent results.

Much like an athlete preparing for a competition by training his mind, skill, and body, developing your signature voice is based on conditioning your *assumptions*, your *communication strategies*, and your *energy*. We call this ACE conditioning.

Instead of trying to mimic those at the top or doing nothing at all, you need to ask yourself far more fundamental questions:

- Who am I, and who do I want to be as a leader in this organization?
- What is my value proposition to this organization?
- What do my stakeholders—direct reports, peers, boss, C-suite—need from me, and how can I deliver?
- How do I impact the business in a way that is authentic to me and resonates with others?

Only by taking a critical approach that involves both introspection and gathering feedback from others can you start building the presence you want and that the organization needs you to have.

When we lead our executive training programs we start by asking people to describe someone they know who shows effective presence. Typically, we hear:

- He sets a vision and inspires action.
- She effortlessly conveys a clear message to multiple audiences.
- He is confident and also knows when to say, "I don't know."
- She's comfortable in her skin.
- He walks the talk.

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- She is aware of what others in the organization think and feel.
- He has the ability to be direct in a non-confrontational way.
- She has grace under pressure.

Presence is one of those things that you know when you see it. But most people have a hard time articulating exactly what creates it. This book offers a framework that enables people to expand their leadership presence by taking concrete actions. We break down what leadership presence is and provide a step-by-step approach to developing your own leadership voice.

Chapter 1: Finding Your Signature Voice

A good tennis player will have a stronger forehand or a stronger backhand and will favor that strength. An exceptional tennis player will have a strong forehand *and* a strong backhand, will masterfully rely on the one that is going to help win each point, and will use them in concert to win the match.

Similarly, as you move along the leadership pipeline, you need to be able to bring together two capabilities: *the ability to demonstrate your value and distinction*, and *the ability to connect and align with your stakeholders*. When you are able to use both of these capabilities—a driving *voice for self* and a supportive *voice for others*—you will have found your signature voice.

As the demands of your role increase, the decisions you need to influence become more complex or, if you're under more and more stress, it's natural to seek out your comfort zone and lean more heavily on one voice than the other, like a tennis player whose preferred stroke is the backhand. In these situations, natural tendencies, preferences, and styles take over. And when that happens, people may begin to question your leadership potential.

Your challenge as a leader is to *use both voices strategically and adaptively*—to speak for yourself, your team, and your function and to know when to do the same for others, their teams, and their functions.

SUPPORTIVE VOICE: When you use your *voice for others*, people see you as collaborative and approachable. Colleagues often seek your advice, confident that you will be able to see their perspective in the situation without judgment. You take time to make decisions because you believe that considering multiple perspectives ultimately leads to a better solution. However, to some of your colleagues you seem slow to make tough decisions, especially when they affect others negatively.

In meetings you are rarely the first to speak or offer an opinion because you'd prefer to listen and observe. You are often offended by colleagues who use up time trying to be heard rather than trying to offer anything substantive. You often feel stretched and blame others for creating unrealistic priorities and deadlines for you and your team. Because you are naturally service oriented, you also feel the tension of wanting to uphold your commitments to others, often at the expense of your or your team's time and your own health.

DRIVING VOICE: When you use your *voice for self*, others see you as driven and focused. They view you as successful in advocating your own, your team's, or your function's agenda, but they think you sometimes fail to acknowledge other's agendas or completely disregard them. Along your rise through the ranks, you may have rubbed others the

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wrong way. Those around you describe your style as “direct,” “judgmental,” “demanding,” or “confident.” To some, that confidence may even be perceived as arrogance.

You often feel impatient with others. In meetings, you wish they would move faster, speak in bullet points, grasp ideas quickly, and move on when a decision is made. Building consensus and aligning with others feels painful. You work best when you have direct authority over a team or are in the presence of senior management.

PASSIVE VOICE: Almost everyone has moments when neither a voice for self nor a voice for others is strong and clear. That results in a wide range of perceptions: passive, wallflower, passive-aggressive, defensive, shut down, or disengaged. Even at the highest leadership levels, one’s presence can slide to either voice and then, when nothing is done, slide again into passive voice.

The starting point to achieving and maintaining signature voice is to understand where and why your presence slides. Which voice comes naturally to you? Which takes more effort? In what situations do you reactively move out of signature voice and into one of the other voices? Remember a time when you were not at your personal best: Which voice did you move to? Which voice did you lose sight of?

Knowing which voice you slide to *most often* is key. That is your baseline—from there, you can start working toward the goal of having a consistent signature voice.

You may be wondering if there are situations or circumstances when you should strategically use one or the other voice more. We emphatically say *yes*. But the key is to do it consciously rather than on autopilot so you lean on the voice that will be most effective for the situation or audience at hand. *You should never fully abandon one voice for the other.* You can adamantly disagree with a colleague and express your convictions (voice for self) without ever losing sight of the other person (voice for others) by maintaining an appropriate level of engagement and respect.

This integration is critical. Those who have mastered signature voice can adeptly oscillate between voice for self to voice for others to convey a presence that is approachable and consistent. Signature voice is ultimately about discovering what’s possible when you are capable of embracing and using both voices.

Chapter 2: How Do I Get to Signature Voice?

Leadership presence is the aggregate of three things: what you believe, how you communicate, and the energy you express. Over the years, to help clients remember these drivers of presence, we created the ACE model, an acronym for *assumptions, communication strategies, and energy*.

Together, these three parts form a system. If any part is out of whack, it will affect the others and cause your signature voice to slide into one of the other three voices. When building your signature voice you need to focus on the entire system—what you are thinking (mind), what you are saying (skill), and how you are expressing yourself (body)—not simply one aspect.

For example, an executive might take the feedback she received about how she communicates with her peers and make a concerted effort to demonstrate concern and interest in their opinions by asking questions and paraphrasing what she hears. But if she assumes she knows the right answer regardless of what the feedback says, her effort to convey concern will fail. Or if she continues to sit through meetings signaling negative energy—arms crossed,

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constantly checking her watch—her peers will see through her. Instead, to become more effective, she needs to think about all three levers and condition herself in each area.

The ACE model—the *how* of signature voice—not only provides clues to what is weakening your presence but it can also give you an actionable way forward. By working through each component of ACE, you gain a clear prescription for how to build signature voice.

ACE helps you interpret feedback and take action. Openness to learning how others perceive how you think, speak, and show up is a prerequisite to building a signature voice. ACE helps you marry intent with impact. The more senior you become, the more perception matters. You are increasingly under a microscope. Your team members, peers, and superiors interpret your every thought, word, and gesture with greater nuance because of the position you hold. And those interpretations drive how people respond to you. Therefore, it's important to *align your intention with your impact*.

Ask yourself: What is my signature voice in this situation, with this audience, and in this role? What would my personal best be? Once you are clear on your intention, then condition and prepare your assumptions, communication strategies, and energy to be congruent with the impact you intend and the results you seek. *Most executives run into trouble when their presence is not congruent with their intentions or where they are in the leadership pipeline.*

ACE helps you reach your personal best more often and more consistently by honoring your strengths. In fact, inherent to signature voice is the need to maintain the voice you are naturally skilled at while increasing your facility with the other. But as you embrace the less preferred voice, you will take your success to a new level.

Although we present each component of the ACE model as three separate levers, they are inextricably linked. Your assumptions drive what you say and how you appear to others. And in return, your communication strategies and energy influence your mind-set.

For example, if you have the mind-set that says, “I’m not a peer to this executive; I should be deferential to authority,” it will come through in what you say and how you appear. If you overuse the phrase “I’m sorry,” it will reinforce your assumption that you are not a peer and need permission and cause you to hunch more. Likewise, if you are not at your physical best—perhaps because you are tired or stressed out—you are more likely to hunch, reinforcing your belief that you need to be deferential, which will lead to further requests for permission.

Everyone has a baseline ACE—the place they are starting from when they condition themselves for signature voice. We find that what works best is to do an initial assessment and then create a vision of where you want to be.

We notice that many of our clients become energized after doing an initial assessment of ACE because they finally have a clear action plan to work against and a clear path forward. The key is to take that baseline and focus on the skills you need to increase your presence in the role you aspire to. You can create your own roadmap for building your signature voice.

Chapter 3: ASSUMPTIONS – Mental Conditioning

We start with *assumptions* because they are the bedrock of our words and actions. Your beliefs about yourself, others, and the situation you are in have the power to bolster your presence but also to undermine it. What you think and feel deeply influences your own experience and how other people experience you.

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To move to signature voice you need to question the assumptions you bring to work. You don't need to stop believing that your agenda is important or that teamwork is important. Instead, you need to reframe your assumptions from the perspective of what you are trying to achieve and the leadership presence you want to project.

Countless studies have shown that *what you think, believe, and focus on affects what you achieve*. Your assumptions—the ideas and beliefs you hold about yourself and your team, others, their teams, the terrain and playing field you operate in—become self-fulfilling prophecies. They have a seismic effect on your leadership presence. Negative assumptions (i.e., that you do not have what it takes or that you are not senior enough to substantially contribute) can undermine your presence. Positive ones (i.e., you were promoted for good reasons or that you add value to every conversation) make you more confident and bolster your presence.

You are going to have beliefs about yourself, those around you, and the situations you are in. You need to make the most of them while preventing them from eroding your presence.

To enhance your leadership presence, three of the most critical assumptions you need to pay attention to are *confidence, perspective, and clarity*.

Confidence is what you bring to the table. Many leaders entering new roles make a classic mistake: *they wrongly assess what value they are bringing to the table*. Some sabotage their success by assuming their contributions are of lower value relative to what everybody else offers. Others assume that what they bring is always of highest value, and they end up standing in the way of others.

To mentally condition yourself for signature voice, you need to understand your relationship to authority and your beliefs about other people around the table, especially those at the top. A critical step to strengthening your voice as a leader is to maintain an appropriate respect for seniority while holding your own new power.

Developing a clear understanding of the value you bring to the table—your value proposition—requires examining the unique combination of strengths, skills, experience, passions, and preferences you bring to your role, especially those things you contribute that others don't. Your value proposition is a key part of the word *signature* in signature voice.

Perspective is the hat you wear. The functional and technical expertise you bring to the organization is what makes you valuable to your function and is the foundation for your perspective. But as you pursue your career, there comes a time when you must expand your perspective beyond your immediate area of expertise and look up, down, and sideways.

Shifting your presence to signature voice requires you to broaden your view. You need to try on other hats to see issues through other's eyes and take a more strategic, organization-focused perspective. Before a meeting, for example, ask yourself, "What does this audience care about most?" Truly skilled negotiators know they cannot create and optimize value until they understand the perspectives of the other parties.

Being in signature voice means you are able to see an issue through a strategic lens. Executives with effective presence do what's best for the organization, even if it's not in the immediate interest of their function.

Clarity is what your values are. When you feel aligned to your core values, you feel energized and thrive. And, conversely, when these values are offended or violated, you feel drained and frustrated. Getting in touch with those things that are most important to you is critical to sustaining a signature voice.

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The tricky thing about values is that they are individual to each person. To leverage your values in a positive way, start by understanding what values you hold most dear. Then, instead of trying to convince those around you that they should hold the same values as you, understand that they have their own values and begin focusing on what you have in common. Usually, this is a shared goal.

Uncovering your assumptions around your values is not easy, but it will help you better understand what motivates you, what defines success, and what ultimately gives meaning to your life. Your values, after all, are at the heart of your voice for self.

Chapter 4: COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES – Skill Conditioning

What you say and how you say it play a large role in creating an effective presence and are an important part of conditioning for signature voice.

Your communication strategies are one of the first ways that people perceive you. Based on what you say, they make judgments about your competence as a leader. Therefore, this is when you often gain the most traction with your presence. You need to ask yourself, “What communication strategies or skills will help me enhance my presence and impact?”

Communication is a fundamental leadership skill. It’s the foundation for establishing your leadership presence. It’s how you connect with people. Yet we often get lazy about communication, especially when we are crunched for time or stressed out. We take shortcuts to save time and energy. In our work, we see client after client go on autopilot when communicating.

As with the other parts of the ACE model, executives with effective presence are intentional about the way they communicate—they bring consciousness to what they say rather than defaulting to their preferred style. They interact with others flexibly and purposefully.

Unfortunately, most people do not use all the communication techniques available. Instead, they return to the ones they are most comfortable with. It’s like a golfer who only uses one or two clubs.

When communicating at a leadership level, you aren’t simply trying to make your point, you are trying to make sure your message reaches your audience. *Command and vision coupled with engagement and inspiration fill a room.* To accomplish this effectively you must provide context and framing for your message so it is relevant for your audience; deliver a clear, crisp, and consistent message and be able to listen, engage, and connect to your audience.

All leaders need three core communication techniques in their toolkit to support signature voice: *framing, advocacy, and listening and engagement.*

Framing provides context and vision. It’s the most difficult skill to master, yet the one with the greatest impact. Framing your message provides the context through which others view your message and makes your message relevant to your audience.

Many executives find as they progress through the leadership pipeline that the number of audiences and constituencies they have to consider also increases. This means being intentional: Who is the audience? What is the tone you want to strike? What outcomes do you hope to achieve from this communication? Framing is not meant to

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spin or sugarcoat an unpleasant message. Instead, they offer context, focus people on the most important issues, or make your message salient to others.

- *Strategic frames* link your message to the organization's overall priorities.
- *Outcome frames* tie your message to the goals you're trying to achieve.
- *Metaphor frames* use a metaphor or analogy to bring life to your message.
- *Sound-bite frames* encapsulate your message in a pithy, memorable statement.

Advocacy clearly conveys your message. As a leader you need to have a distinct point of view and communicate it in a crisp, structured way so that others will know where you stand on an issue.

To effectively advocate and increase your self-confidence and the confidence others have in you, add structure to your communications. Begin with your bottom line and then support your statement with details and explanation.

Before you deliver your message, know your audience and what its members care about and want to know. Be clear on what your message is. Figure out what outcome you want when you're done communicating.

Structured advocacy goes a long way in building a more confident presence. It takes some preparation and practice. It can be helpful to distill thoughts into bullet points to keep your presentation punchy and concise.

Listening and engaging increases connection. Many leaders don't think they need to listen. They believe it's a waste of time. They don't care. They already know the answer. But these leaders are taking a big risk. Influencing people is far more effective than pushing them in a certain direction. To influence others, you need an awareness of their viewpoints.

At the most senior levels, an executive's ability to listen to what is going on inside and outside the organization is critical to having a signature voice. *Surface listening* hears and understands the words. *Issues-based listening* goes beyond the facts and focuses on what matters. *Emotions-based listening* senses the underlying emotion and motivation behind the issues. You are in signature voice when you are listening, asking insightful questions, and engaged in active dialogue with another person or audience.

Chapter 5: ENERGY – Physical Conditioning

People interpret you as a leader through your physical presence and energy. Based on what your body language says and your image projects, they make assumptions about what you are thinking and feeling, regardless of what you are saying. Far too often, executives fail to align their physical energy with what they want to achieve.

When we talk about energy, we mean both the superficial layer—how you look—and the vibe you give off—the mood and tone you convey. How you appear to others matters as much as what you say.

It's impossible to talk about executive presence without addressing the "book cover" of a leader, the outer, visible layer of presence that creates a first impression. This is how you dress, how you style your hair, and so on. Sharpening your book cover yields powerful positive benefits.

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The energy you give off has an incredible impact beyond how good you look or how crisp your presentation is. Instead of acting out or copying what you think success looks like, physically condition yourself to find an authentic energy that connects with others. There's something incredibly appealing and magnetic about people who are at ease, relaxed, and comfortable in their own skin.

Most people find it hard to comprehend how they are being perceived physically. Without a mirror angled at you at all times, you truly don't understand what others are seeing. In many of our training and coaching sessions we use a video camera to help clients see what their "E" in ACE looks like.

Whether you intend to or not, you send strong messages through your body language and energy. Simply by looking at you, people make assessments about your knowledge, expertise, and competence as a leader. To maintain control over what your body language communicates, you need to identify and manage the physical cues you send and restore your energy so you have the physical endurance you need as a leader.

We have created a framework using the acronym **CENTER** to help leaders remember the six cue points where individuals signal to others what they are thinking and feeling. When your presence slides out of signature voice, you communicate that through these unconscious signals: core posture; eye contact; natural gestures; tone, tempo, and timing; facial expressions; and regions and territory.

By being aware of each of these points you can take inventory of how your presence is being perceived. The key is to catch the presence slide before it jeopardizes a situation. To do that, look for clues that the slide is beginning. It's critical to manage your physical cues because, unfortunately, negative interactions create stronger impressions than positive ones and have an impact that is up to five times greater.

Once you are more aware of your body and the energy you give off, the next step is to condition the executive endurance needed for the role you are in. In today's corporate environment, stress and pressure are givens. The reality is that energy is not an endless resource. It needs to be continually replenished, a process that is specific to each individual. For some it may involve getting a good night's sleep or holding off on the morning coffee. For others it may be getting more exercise or avoiding sugar.

Once you have more clarity about your energy, your cues, and what restores you, you need to recognize the *wake* you have within your organization. Many executives are not aware of the tremendous ripple effect their nonverbal energy and cues have throughout a company. The more senior you become, the more visible you are and the deeper and broader the waves you send throughout the organization. This can have a tremendous impact on your effectiveness as a leader and must be managed.

You can take three steps to effectively manage the tone you set. First, you must recognize that your tone is contagious. Second, calibrate your energy to match the situation. Third, create physical rituals that help you maintain your composure or dial up your energy when necessary.

When you meet with others, is your energy congruent with the conviction you have about the topic? When you calibrate your energy—dimming the wattage or infusing more expression into your delivery—you are being more authentic in your communication.

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Another key component of physical conditioning is managing your visibility in the organization. This means being intentional and thoughtful about the individuals you need to be in the physical presence of. You can do that by identifying key influencers and cultivating operational, personal, and strategic networks.

Chapter 6: What's Next?

Think of any star athlete—Michael Jordan in basketball, Chris Evert in tennis, or Tiger Woods in golf. These athletes have been at the top of their game. Once they reached the pinnacle of their sport, they didn't sit back. They had a conditioning regimen: every day they practiced, they prepared themselves, and they improved. Even with skills that inspired awe in others, they were conscious and intentional about their training, not asleep and on autopilot. They were always looking for that edge. Great leaders are similarly intentional about building their presence.

As you've learned throughout this book, the behaviors that comprise a signature voice are individual and are acquired through intentional practice. No one is born with them. They are not handed out as you make the transition into a firm leader or having a signature voice. Anyone at any level can have them. But developing a signature voice is a lifelong commitment. In fact, even when you build your signature voice, you have to continue to work at maintaining it—forever.

After you use ACE to enhance your signature voice, you can continue to enhance and condition your voice by returning to ACE when new situations cause your presence to slide.

The key to effective leadership presence is not only the ability to attain it but also to know when your presence is starting to slide. Circumstances change—new business requirements, new roles, new direct reports—and your presence must be flexible enough to change with them. When you notice that you are starting to slide you need to recognize the triggers, the specific events, people, or circumstances that are causing you to backslide, and then correct your course. It's important to catch yourself before you slide further. Start by being aware of the life events that can cause you to lose focus on either your voice for self or voice for others.

After we've worked with coaching clients we ask them to create a one-page table they can look at every day to remind them what assumptions, communication strategies, and energy drives their personal best. One of our clients told us that even now, many years after coaching, he still pulls up that page when he finds himself in a challenging situation.

Leaders who have found their signature voice have a greater ability to align, motivate, and inspire, especially during times of organizational change and uncertainty. The more senior you become, the more often your role requires you to deliver organizational news, decisions, or policies that impact a significant number of people. These moments present both the greatest challenge to and the greatest opportunity for your leadership presence and your ability to be authentic in connecting. In those situations your voice is the voice of the organization and what you believe, what you say, and how you look physically have a tremendous impact on others.

When you are able to align what you love to do and what your organization does, you are more fully able to use your signature voice. (Sometimes individuals find that the signature voice they've worked so hard to identify is at odds with their organization. Be honest with yourself if there is a mismatch and consider finding a new opportunity elsewhere.)

When you become more competent in both your voice for self and voice for others, you expand the possibilities of what you can achieve. You can begin to lead with purpose. We've seen clients with increased capabilities to influence

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and navigate bigger platforms and a variety of situations and audiences find the room to ask the bigger questions about purpose, vision, and living an authentic life.

When you have a voice and connect with others—when you find your signature voice—you actually become more yourself. Authentic leadership presence emerges when you speak from your most heartfelt beliefs.

Once you've found your signature voice, you can use that platform to have an even bigger impact than before. Not only can you be better at your current role, but you influence a broader sphere and infuse your work with purpose and mission.

Chapter 7: Helping Others Find Their Signature Voices

So far, this book has focused on how an individual leader can build a more authentic, confident, and connected leadership presence. Many of our clients, upon finding their signature voice, are inspired to help their direct reports and others in their organization do the same. As someone's manager, mentor, or peer you can play a critical role in supporting and accelerating the individual's journey toward *signature presence*.

You can also proactively influence your organization's culture by emphasizing that presence is something anyone can build. You can refuse to let others pigeonhole leadership presence as an issue of appearance or communication style because you understand it's a function of mind, skill, and body. And you can be clear about what presence is, which will help you create a culture in which authenticity and adaptability are respected and cultivated.

There are four ways to use the signature voice and ACE frameworks as you coach and mentor people for whom presence is an issue:

- *Offer a clear assessment of presence:* Help your direct reports understand how their presence is currently perceived and the impact it's having.
- *Create an integrated action plan:* Help them articulate a plan to develop their presence using the ACE model.
- *Offer coaching in real time:* Help them work through specific issues and challenges along the way.
- *Celebrate growth and help overcome obstacles:* Help them recognize the successes and obstacles that are a part of the process.

Working with leaders to find their signature voices is a responsibility and a privilege. It is a responsibility in that once you tell people what you and others see in their behavior, you must then help them reach their potential. It is also a privilege in that you witness a deep and personal passage on the leadership journey. And if you stay open, you are also given a tremendous learning opportunity.

Conclusion

We hope this book has inspired you to find your signature voice. If you are on the cusp of becoming a senior leader or officer in your organization, we hope you will find a way forward and recognize the choices you have as a leader. You can do what has worked for you, relying on the same tools in your toolbox. Or you can be conscious and intentional about your leadership presence by redefining your value proposition and shaping the opportunities ahead of you. It

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is a liberating moment when you turn off the autopilot, recognize you have a default position, and realize you have a choice to go there or not. Finding your signature voice allows you to be the leader you want to be.

The Pastor's Perspective

I was challenged by *Own the Room*. The language and approach is different from what I am used to, so I had to really think about the material.

As I worked through it, there was one particular idea I took hold of and am thinking more about: how we all have a default way of communicating, one that is natural to us and has probably been effective in different situations. Yet, if we are going to continue to be effective, we have to develop a variety of communication styles and the self-awareness and the situational-awareness to know when and how to use them.

I suspect most of us don't think much about that. We easily fall into the "this is just who I am" way of approaching things, which justifies us not having to change or grow. The understanding that we *can* change, that we *can* develop new skills, that we *can* become more effective, is a key to doing it. But once we do it—develop new ways of communicating that fit different situations—we get hooked.

I don't think that is always easy. I have to think hard about how I naturally communicate and what approach I take in different situations. I'm realizing that I am not always intentional in what I do. Taking a moment to take stock of what is happening and identifying what is needed is a habit and a skill that I intend to develop as I go on. I can see the value in it.

Part of the challenge for me in doing that is the high value I place on authenticity. I never want to be a fake or a phony or act in a way that is not true to who I really am in order to get a result. (That is not what the authors are suggesting, to be clear). I want to be intentional and effective, so I need to make sure I'm acting with integrity even as I develop different communication skills.

What did you take away from *Own the Room*? I'm interested in hearing your thoughts. Click [here](#) and let me know what you're thinking.