Part Two

The Personal Leadership Communication Guide: Biography with a Purpose

The chapters of Part Two provide practical instruction on preparing a comprehensive guide for inspiring communication. To benefit fully, select a specific change that you want to implement, and then follow the instructions given in the next chapters. Because this Guide calls for elements of both competence and trustworthiness, it is biographical as well as situational. The process of preparing it asks you to relate your values to the change you are proposing even as you are constructing the logical case. Thus you will need to find, prepare, and document material that will be the grist for communication in every venue.

These chapters ask for and demonstrate the use of symbol and image, metaphor and analogy, and story, personal experience, and myth, and they show how these elements relate to the data and circumstances of the situation. All of them work together to build trust in you and to inspire others to engage in the change you are leading. The Guide becomes the foundation for all of your leadership communication as you go forward.

Consider these chapters as a "questioning machine" for your use. If you have carefully considered the questions, and if you have answered these questions authentically in writing and have in the process sensed the internal resonance of what you have written, then your message will come through with passion and conviction as you communicate. People will know what vision you propose, and will resonate with your character.

Composing the Guide might seem like a task to delegate. After all, unlike Matt Hyde, most people don't sit long nights in tents. I'm not suggesting that you must sit by a fire and compose every presentation or e-mail with a quill pen. I *am* suggesting that you must compose the broad range of the content of your conviction about what needs to change, even if the words are put to paper by someone else. I don't recommend surrogates for this task, but an interviewer could be helpful and you can use the questions posed in this book for that function. You must edit drafts from your own conviction, with your own stories and experience to maintain your independence. Writing your own conviction is like Woody Allen's characterization of taking a metaphysics final in college. You can't cheat by looking into the soul of the kid next to you.

Advisers can be very effective, but they have to be chosen carefully. The very best partners in this enterprise are not just good technicians; they are also strong thinkers and coaches who push you to articulate your own thoughts and feelings in the most effective way. Ted Sorenson, John Kennedy's speechwriter, was also Kennedy's chief of staff and conversed with the president every day. By contrast, many of today's communication professionals, while excellent composers, have little access to their principals. They may be able to predict the person's position or plan, but they know little of the inner drive or conviction of the person for whom they write. Any advisers you choose should be trusted associates whom you respect for more than their technical talent. They should also be willing to ask questions, push you to record your own thoughts and stories, offer substantive advice, and listen to you, and then reflect your own beliefs back to you in language that feels right to you, not only to them. You should take them into your confidence.

Mario Cuomo is a superb writer—yet he includes other associates in his process of constructing messages. In writing his remarks on abortion rights for the Department of Theology at the University of Notre Dame, he relied on two of his staff members: "gifted thinkers and writers, both of them profoundly Catholic and just as

troubled as I was by the task of agonizing over the powerful, almost paralyzing issues raised by the abortion question. We wrote, discussed, debated, and finally decided."[1]

Not every communication opportunity will require you to use every element of your Guide. However, it will be the basis for most communication you have about your plan to change things for the better. Others can help, but finally, it is your own values, your own commitment to an issue that will determine the power of the message to you—and therefore to others. Whatever response you want from others must happen in you first. Working through the Guide will enable you to put the necessary leadership communication elements in place. In the process, you will increase your own clarity and deepen your conviction: you will be inspired to move ahead with the changes that are important to you.

These are the major sections of a Personal Leadership Communication Guide:

- Establishing Competence and Building Trustworthiness
- Creating Shared Context
- Declaring and Describing the Future
- Committing to Action

Each section includes specific sub-elements, each one contributing to the objectives of engaging yourself and others around the overall theme. The chapters devoted to each of these sections include many individual examples—some from clients, some from research—to demonstrate the principles. In addition, I use excerpts from two Guides as instructive examples for all of the elements. One is from a colleague and client leading a large organization. The other is a Guide that I've been developing for the last ten years regarding the primary and secondary education system in the United States.

Most people who read this work will have some opinion about education, wherever they reside. It is a worldwide issue and is administered in different ways in different cultures. Accordingly, I suspect the topic will have some interest for everyone. Even so, there is danger in presenting this Guide. You might well disagree with some of the opinions expressed or find yourself distracted by the content. I hope this distraction does not occur and that even if your opinion on this issue differs from mine, you will see the power and content of the Guide's framework as demonstrated in a broad-gauged issue. If you wish to refer to the entire Guide, you can find it on the website (www.leadingoutloud.com).

As you prepare your own Guide, please remember that the sample Guides are offered only to model the form and the general content and flow. The next page presents the entire framework. This is replicated in Appendix B and at the website. Chapters Five through Eight follow with explanations, questions, and examples for each section.

Framework for Personal Leadership Communication Guide

1. Establishing Competence and Building Trustworthiness
   - Competence
     - Clarity of Purpose
       Problem
       Specific Change Advocated
       Evidence of Compelling Need
       Broad Implications, Value Represented
     - Credentials and Vulnerabilities
   - Trustworthiness
     - Displaying Empathy
       Expressing Gratitude
       Acknowledging Resistance
       Finding Commonality in Purpose
     - Willingness to Be Known
       Personal Motivation, Personal Value
2. Creating Shared Context
   - History
   - Priority
   - Current Reality (include barriers)
   - Reinforcing Competence and Trust
   - Articulating a Broader Perspective
3. Declaring and Describing the Future: An Act of Creation . . .
   - Vivid Picture, Sensory-Rich Images
   - Stakes (If we do . . . If we don't. . . .)
   - Values Expressed Either Way
4. Committing to Action
   - Steps (organizational)
   - Personal Commitment, Personal Action
   - Request for Action (specific)

Note

1. M. Cuomo, *More Than Words: The Speeches of Mario Cuomo* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993), p. xvii.

Chapter Five

Establishing Competence and Building Trustworthiness

Any leader-inspired message for change must attend to three fundamental relationships—the relationship between the leader and the message, that between the leader and the constituents, and that between the constituents and the message. I have been addressing all three, emphasizing that the message has to be congruent with you as a person—the value represented by the change must be important to you.

The relationship you are trying to inspire is between other people and the message, so that people become committed to a cause voiced by you, the leader. Yet this commitment will happen only when the primary relationship, the one between you and those you hope to inspire, is based on your competence and trustworthiness. Quite naturally, these are the first considerations of anyone being asked to change, so the first section of the Leadership Communication Guide deals with these elements.

Establishing Competence

As you develop your Guide, you will need to answer a number of questions for yourself and then for others. The framework for the Guide starts with the elements that display competence: clear purpose and credentials.

Clarity of Purpose

- What is the problem?
- What is the specific change you are proposing?
- What one piece of evidence shows you and others a compelling need?
- What value is represented by the change and what are the broadest implications?

The answers to these questions will transform change into progress; they will support your advocacy and your zeal. Ignoring these questions instead of answering them for yourself first and then for others could send you on a vector that might well have a substantially different end point than you intended. Your answers to these questions will yield the grist to gain interest, to challenge others to act, to engage, to contribute. Unless they believe you know what you're doing and why, others might be entertained or bored, they might even be interested, but they will not engage with the message with any intent to act. For that engagement to occur, you need a clear idea of your purpose, one that is grounded in the practical necessity.

In 2013, we have the benefit of hindsight regarding the most challenging financial crisis of the last eighty years. Franklin Raines, former chairman and CEO of Fannie Mae, the primary real estate loan guarantor in the United States, is often maligned for his role in the fall of that institution. Yet, in the early 2000s, he carried a broad message that the African American effort for equality was not over. His purpose was, as he said in a 2002 speech to the Howard University graduating class, to "identify racial gaps," determine "why they exist," and determine "how we close them." What is the compelling need? According to Raines, "If America had racial

equality in education, and jobs, African Americans would have . . . two million more high school degrees, two million more college degrees, . . . and nearly $200 billion more income." The disparity that exists, shown by the numbers, totals "over $1 trillion in wealth."[1] Problem: disparity. Purpose: cure it. Compelling evidence: clear. Specific Change: Make it possible for lower-income families to buy homes. To Raines's credit, he did not back down from his actions when called to a subcommittee of Congress in 2010. Perhaps he was overly zealous; perhaps he used a quasi-governmental agency to further a social goal. One could certainly discuss the effectiveness of his particular plan for progress or the wisdom of using public financing of homes to further social goals, but one could not question the purpose of his actions.

As with Franklin Raines, gaining clarity of purpose focuses your attention on your strongest conviction, and clarity of purpose focuses others' attention in a single direction. As it does, it begins to establish your own confidence, and others' feelings of confidence in you, the leader. Raines often spoke informally about the overriding vision of what he was trying to do. "We are in the American Dream Business," he would say, and one could certainly understand his enthusiasm as more and more people became qualified for home ownership.

Rebekah Saul Butler began to look at health care issues as a master's degree candidate at the University of California, Berkeley. She developed this statement of purpose to anchor her leadership effort in encouraging more conscious end-of-life decisions. Clearly, this states the evidence of the problem and the specific change she is after.

> End-of-life care is central to our national concern over the budget and the aging population, since 30 percent of all Medicare funds are spent in the last year of life. . . . I am going to advocate that we all have frank, open discussions in our families about these issues. . . . about aging, death and dying, what they mean, and how you will confront them.[2]

Clarity at the outset, even for a problem as daunting as death, serves notice to everyone that you are entering difficult territory with some courage behind your conviction. The more difficult the issue, the more clarity is needed. Rebekah's early work on her Guide became a precursor for her current work as a program director for a philanthropic foundation, in which she oversees the distribution of grants from the foundation in several related fields.

Authentic decisiveness creates respect. Others' disagreement with a leader on an issue can be countered by that leader's willingness to engage truthfully and boldly, so the more difficult the issue, the more desirable it is to be candid and forthright in formulating and stating your purpose. As a result of your strength, others will perceive a new possibility being created, and you will be marked as a person of principle and a person of strong conviction; people will perceive you as a person of competence.

Political leaders know this principle well, and generally get their point of view out very early in any communication. Consider the first sentence of the text of the late Senator Edward Kennedy's prepared speech on Iraq in late 2002: "I have come here today to express my view that America should not go to war against Iraq unless and until other reasonable alternatives are exhausted."[3]

Clarity and strength of purpose help establish competence, and compel others to engage. They do not commit you to inflexibility but do establish your desire to engage.

I offer here the first elements of a Guide I've been working on since 2003; it is now in its fifteenth update. I've used this Guide more than a hundred times in advocating change in the education system in the United States, in many different venues.

Sample from the Education Guide

Purpose: This guide proposes a fundamental change in our system of primary and secondary education in the United States.

Specific Change: We should focus our efforts and most of our educational resources on retaining the teachers who are passionate and effective in their work, and in developing these characteristics in new recruits to teach.

Compelling Need and Evidence: We need reform because our federal and state governments are, in general, not being effective at improving our system. Our federal government's effort at supporting education is, as SAT CEO Gaston Caperton once said, "like making a bread sandwich"—standards on one side and measurement (testing) on the other, with no nourishment in the middle—nothing to support students to actually grow from inadequate to outstanding in their achievement. Our state efforts are generally focused on things that, according to new research, don't matter much, like administration, formal teacher certification, reducing class size (to the exclusion of everything else), and specific curriculum. According to the Justice Department, in 1993, 20 percent of high school graduates could not read their diploma. By 2011, there were 3.1 million students graduating. If that rate is consistent, more than half a million of them could not handle the complexity of that small document, and this, of course, does not account for the drop-outs, also a substantial number.

Broadest Implication and Value Represented: This is about *fairness*. If a system is going to be public, it should deliver fair value to all, not just to an elite few. Yet this bifurcation has happened despite the fact that most of us believe that a basic education is fundamental to participative democracy. A nation that shows no commitment to broad-based education is doomed to failure as the population becomes, on the average, less sophisticated, less knowledgeable, and less able to care for itself. This not only erodes our place in the world, it creates decay from within, cheapening our heritage and creating grave doubts about our future.

We need to reverse this trend.

This opening of the Guide establishes its foundation and urgency. I revise the evidentiary elements as new data becomes available. The issue is clear.

The next questions have to do with your capability and interest in leading change.

Credentials and Vulnerability

- What work experience, life experience, and education qualify you to lead change in this area?
- What are your vulnerabilities?

Your competence to lead a given change with a given group is a function of your directly relevant work experience, life experience, and education, as well as additional credentials that might be important to the particular constituency. If you have the title of leader you might well have the formal authority to lead, but to follow your lead with their own commitment, people will need to know how you gained competence in your chosen field.

Many of us underplay our credentials, either out of modesty or from the common tendency to believe that others should just know our background. But would you consider following the lead of anyone whose credentials you don't know? As you develop your Guide, you do have to consider your qualifications and be clear about them. Remember, the Guide is a tool for you to use to engage, so while you will mention different parts of it in any given communication, you want to include every relevant bit of experience and education in the Guide itself—particularly those items that are especially meaningful to you and that might be meaningful to someone else. You then need to find a way to make your constituents aware of the qualifications they would find particularly important—those that would give them confidence in your ability.

You also need to consider *doubts* others might have and acknowledge your own gaps in credentials. The authenticity of disclosing vulnerabilities builds trust, inevitably preventing or mitigating attacks in the future. It also allows you to be realistic, to assess what other help you will need for the implementation. As you begin to communicate you will encounter others who will fill those gaps in your own ability. At the very least, even if you never *disclose* these vulnerabilities, you want to make sure you are aware of them. Someone will probably bring them up. They belong in your Guide.

While he was governor of New York, Mario Cuomo was a champion of abortion rights as a matter of public policy—but he was also a practicing, devout Catholic. As hinted at in Part Two's opening text, when he was asked to address the combined faculty and administration of Notre Dame on the subject, he found it the perfect opportunity to think through and ferret out his own logic and feeling on this subject in a way that he had not before. The address that he eventually gave formed the basis for his extemporaneous remarks on the subject of the relationship of his faith to his public policy for the rest of his career. Considering the audience for this particular speech, and his constituents in general, he felt the need to tell them directly who he was and who he was not. Try to put yourself in this audience as he addresses this issue:

> Let me begin this part of the effort by underscoring the obvious. I do not speak as a theologian; I do not have that competence. I do not speak as a philosopher; to suggest that I could would be to set a new record for false pride. I don't presume to speak as a "good" person except in the ontological sense of that word. [Rather], I speak here as a politician. And also as a Catholic, a layperson baptized and raised in the pre-Vatican II church, educated in Catholic schools, attached to the church first by birth, then by choice, now by love. An old-fashioned Catholic who sins, regrets, struggles, worries, gets confused, and most of the time feels better after confession. The Catholic church is my spiritual home. My heart is there, and my hope.[4]

Would you have listened, despite any disagreement with his position as you knew it? Aside from the beautiful words, the content of this supplementary self-introduction did far more for Cuomo's trustworthiness with this group and the millions who have viewed or read it since than the bulk of the message. This passage was far more important than the fact that he was a governor who wrestled with public policy every day. He established his connection with this audience as a human being by including his personal motivation to speak and his personal vulnerabilities. Despite the fact that he was advocating a very unpopular position with this group, he was going to be trusted.

Cultural Differences in Credentials

In each culture there are certain credentials that are considered fundamental to one's ability to lead. These may seem superficial, but in the early stages of a change effort, before others have had a chance to evaluate what you say or to hear your conviction on the subject, you need to establish a foothold of competence, just to open the group's collective mind to your leadership. In Europe, family history, social standing, and education are generally considered more important than in the United States, where life experience—what you've done on your own—will be considered as important as your alma mater. In Asia, credentials are often established by family and in some subtler way, to avoid the leader being perceived as self-serving.

Groups of people engaged in specific professions will also demand different evidence to demonstrate competence. An academic group will indeed be interested in your academic credentials, even if they are not directly related to the project. When I was teaching at UC Berkeley in the late 1980s, a dean was appointed who was from the business community. Charged with the monumental task of building a new school, he struggled with lackluster respect from the faculty because he was not an academic. But he had the exact skills and connections to enable him to complete the construction of one of the most beautiful and functional buildings on campus. The constituents who mattered—those who provided the funds—were happy to have him at the helm.

If you are leading a business group to take more risk, then work or life experience is far more valuable than academics in establishing credibility. Bill Gates's and Mark Zuckerberg's work experience are certainly adequate to establish their competence, despite the fact that neither graduated from college. They are not alone. John Bunch, largely responsible for the growth of TD Ameritrade to become a major player in brokerage, does not have a college degree, but he was instrumental in the ascent of Charles Schwab into the realm of integrated

web and personal service brokerage. He is currently CEO of a registered investment advisory firm, which may under his leadership shift the method of buying mutual funds in the United States.

Central to the point is that our history gives us a peek at what we will contribute. When we are young, we are attracted to what we love, and if we are lucky, following that urge yields a career.

A few years ago, a young environmentalist named Rob Nicholson was developing a Communication Guide to lead his peers in conservation. In preparing the base message, he included this statement of credentials:

> I have been extremely fortunate to have spent most of my life educating myself for my work. I have spent almost twenty-five years in schools and over thirty years in the outdoors. I've traveled from the Arctic Ocean to the Equator, climbed some of the highest peaks in Europe and trekked through the jungles of Borneo. As an environmental consultant for six years, I've visited more garbage dumps than I care to remember. I've been involved with oil spills off the coast of Alaska and train wrecks in densely populated urban areas.

His conclusion from all these experiences was that we are not living a sustainable existence and have to change the way we relate to our environment.

Nicholson's notations of credentials were not arrogant or self-serving. By formulating them, he was able to feel more powerful about the topic as he prepared to simply and colorfully let others know what life experience, education, and work experience was relevant to his committed course of change. He intentionally referred to himself as "extremely fortunate," because he really felt that way. In the process of relating his experience, he did not set himself above others. Instead, the wording he chose reflected his real humility, beginning to move him toward a deeper connection with his work and with others he hoped would participate.

The next excerpt from my Education Leadership Communication Guide addresses this issue.

Sample from the Education Guide

> *Credentials and Vulnerabilities:* Now I think I need to reveal to you the obvious. . . . I am not Joseph Chilton Pearce, the great American educational guru—I am Terry Pearce. I only recently earned a master's degree, and it's in mythology, not education. I graduated from a small university in the state of Oregon and did some limited graduate work in the field of law. I am probably also vulnerable to a charge of being anti-bureaucrat, and I realize that my experience is not everyone's experience.
>
> However, I have been involved in education as a teacher for the past twenty years, all of it at the graduate level in professional business schools and schools of public policy and private development companies. This is not my full-time vocation, but it is my love. Every day, I hear the concerns of graduate students and executives, and by any measure, the quality of public education is their number one issue, as they strive to recruit and retain employees, and to market to an ever-less-discerning public. I have actually helped politicians "dumb-down" messages for fear that an uneducated public simply can't grasp the subtleties necessary to make an informed choice.
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> As a student, parent of three, and grandparent of six, I've been exposed to the public school system directly for sixty-five years, and that experience also informs my desire to be involved.

Beginning the Guide with thoughtfulness about your purpose, the specifics of the change, a striking bit of evidence, and the broader implications and values involved will establish your purpose and the primary facts and impressions that are driving your conviction. It will also move you forward as you document the basis of your own excitement and passion for the change. Sharing your credentials and vulnerabilities will align you with the people you are engaging. This is all about competence. The issue of trust comes next, and it's somewhat harder to tackle.

Building Trust—Authenticity

With your competence established through clarity and credentials, you can move toward thinking through and documenting the elements that will establish your trustworthiness. We trust other people when we believe we know who they are at the core and that they authentically have our best interest at heart. The operative word is *authentically.* If you really don't care about others, if you have no urge or instinct to acknowledge them as you

encourage change, you will not be able to gain their trust, even if you follow verbal conventions. As explained in Chapter Two, we all have a built-in ability to decipher intention, though in some this ability is solely unconscious. People know when you care about them.

Without caring, trust conventions are simply rituals that sound good but no longer facilitate connection. These conventions were at one time meaningful, but have since become formalities that we follow (usually unconsciously) to avoid real contact. As but one example, how many times have you heard or participated in this exchange?

"May I help you?"

"No thanks, I'm just looking."

Retail chains spend millions to get rid of this conventional conversation. In 2000, Safeway instituted a policy that required checkout personnel to offer customers help to their cars and to call them by name, a policy that was ignored or openly mocked by many employees—and deeply offensive to many customers. Rules such as these can help accomplish the objective only if there is agreement that such proposed practices indeed include the best interest of employees. If a leader advocates a culture of service and personal connection and can point accurately to its benefit to the entire employee base, then workers will not only cooperate with the policy, they will improve it, fix it, make suggestions about it, and engage fully in its implementation. Conversely, if the leader is seen the same way as Dilbert might see the pointy-headed boss—as a manipulative self-serving bureaucrat—then there is little chance of real change. In the ensuing twelve years, Safeway seems to have turned the credibility corner and other chain stores are emulating them. Inspiration is key. If the people staffing the checkout stands really want to serve, really want to connect, they will do so with no rules. Yet if retail salespeople aren't really interested in helping, that will come through without regard to what they say.

Building trust assures that you have the best interest of everyone at heart, and creates the atmosphere for change initiatives of yours to be taken seriously, whether the constituents are members of organized labor, freelancers, or your family. A loss of trust undermines all else. Two CEOs in the powerful Silicon Valley were dismissed in 2010 to 2012 for what their boards considered breaches of trust. Scott Thompson was ousted at Yahoo after being accused of overstating his education, and Mark Hurd left Hewlett-Packard under duress after the board discovered the appearance of impropriety in a high-level consulting contract. Neither of these men could be described as lacking competence, yet both gave the appearance of a lack of trustworthiness.

Trustworthiness, authentic trustworthiness, appears in many forms and can be undermined in still more. People often use conventional words of acknowledgment to get over the initial anxiety of meeting. A speaker may start by saying, "It's wonderful to be here tonight." Auditors may start by saying, "We're here to help," and the person being audited may reply, "I'm glad to see you." If you avoid using these and similar conventions, and instead enter into the relationship consciously, you can signal your intention to interact more authentically. I can illustrate.

In 1983, I was fortunate enough to meet with former president Jimmy Carter in Beverly Hills, California. My business partner Tom and I were promoting a very simple plan to relieve political tension between the United States and the Soviet Union. Carter had agreed to a short meeting to hear about it.

A Secret Service agent ushered us into the suite; Carter entered briskly shortly thereafter. Since Tom was standing closer to him, he shook Carter's hand first and said something like, "I am honored to meet you, Mr. President. You have been a real inspiration to me." Carter looked right at him and said, "Oh really, Tom, how's that?" I quickly ducked my head and waited for my partner to come up with something good, and in that painful ten seconds of silence that seemed like a day and a half, I learned a valuable lesson about appreciation. If it's authentic, it's written on your heart by experience, not on a piece of paper by convention. My partner's comment was real, he just had not reflected on *why* it was real.

Tom made a nice recovery, saying something about Carter's obvious deep partnership with Rosalyn and his courage in running for the presidency against heavy odds. When Carter shook my hand, I did not offer a gratuitous comment.

How many leaders could pass muster when facing a question like Carter's? Imagine the host of a party stopping you after you have said, "What a lovely home," with the comment, "Oh really, Tom, how's that?"

Once you learn how to stay real, you are able to acknowledge others authentically rather than conventionally. In doing so, a leader can establish uncommon intimacy very quickly. Affirmation of others, or

caring, is central to building trust, and includes the ability to express gratitude and empathize with others' points of view. You must also being willing to be known—to reveal your personal motivations.

Displaying Empathy

- What am I truly thankful for, with regard to this chance to communicate or to those I will interact with?
- On whose shoulders do I stand?
- What are people likely to be thinking and feeling about this issue?
- What emotional and mental resistance will others have to this change?

Steve Farber, author of *Greater Than Yourself* and an exceptional coach and speaker, frequently asks his audiences: "How many of you have ever received a note from someone expressing sincere appreciation?" Most in the audience will raise their hands. "How many of you still have that note?" Most will keep their hands up. He then asks how long the members of the audience have kept the notes. "Five years?" "Ten years?" Many hands remain up even as Steve asks, "Twenty-five years?" But the record is *forty* years, and when Steve asked his respondent if he remembered what the note said, the person reached into his pocket and pulled the note from his wallet. After forty years, he still considered it one of his most prized possessions.

Have you kept a similar note? And if you have, what is your opinion and feeling about the person who wrote it?

These are not rhetorical questions. The ability and willingness to express sincere appreciation is one of the most valuable skills of leadership communication. People will be inclined to follow others who make them feel good about themselves, who display an honest appreciation for who they are and what they do for the organization. As a leader, why not ask yourself what you are truly thankful for, with regard to every chance to communicate? Who—and what circumstance—can you authentically acknowledge as a gift? Whose shoulders do you stand on?

Expressing Gratitude

It sounds simple, yet as the story of the thank-you notes shows, the expression of sincere gratitude is rare and valuable. It is not easy to convey authentic appreciation; moreover, it is not considered important in a world where convention rather than authenticity rules most human communication.

A few years ago, I was attending a program conducted by Brother David Steindl-Rast, a Benedictine monk and a prolific writer on gratefulness, a wonderful teacher, and a person I count as a rare, authentic human being. Brother David described an exercise that one of his teachers had prescribed for him as he was trying to understand gratitude. "For one year," said the abbot, "I want you to write two notes of gratitude before you leave your room in the morning." "Easy enough," thought Brother David, until the teacher added, "and you have to experience the gratitude!"

Brother David is now known worldwide for his pioneering and relentless commitment to gratitude as the key to successful living. His organization (A Network for Grateful Living), website (www.gratefulness.org), writings, and personal appearances reach millions of people every year.

We all know how to say "thank you," just as we know how to say "may I help you," yet few of us consider —in the way Brother David does—how to generate the experience of being grateful. Unfortunately, unless we do generate that experience in ourselves, the object of our thanks will experience only the conventional and obligatory communication—"Thanks"—hardly a note worth keeping for forty years.

Leaders can develop the capability of generating the experience of gratitude in themselves in order to engender the kind of loyalty displayed by those who keep notes for forty years. I've tried the "don't leave your room until you feel grateful" exercise myself. It is enlightening, and en-heartening. Should you try it, you will find that real gratitude is accessed from experience, not from rhetoric. Experience brings with it specificity and feelings, both generators of an authentic response.

A friend and client, the late Ned Dean, was chairman of the Pacific Bank in San Francisco. He wanted to acknowledge one of his board members at a stockholders' meeting at the end of a difficult two years. After he wrote several iterations that used conventional language, I asked Ned to be more specific and detailed. He wrote the following, and later conveyed it to his stockholders. Nearly twenty years later, his expression of gratitude remains one of the best I've ever heard:

> I want to give special thanks to Mark Hubbard, who attended more than fifty board and committee meetings last year, strictly out of his dedication to helping us turn the situation around. I remember one such occasion, about seven o'clock at night in the dead of winter, when I was leaving my office as Mark was coming in. He had just finished a day at his own company, and it was raining, a cold rain that would turn to snow in any other city. He had forgotten his umbrella, so his head was soaked as he came into the lobby. I actually felt guilty leaving so early. Now it's not as though Mark doesn't have other interests. He came to that meeting because he is dedicated, more as a friend of the company than as a board member. And he did it more than fifty times when we needed him most. I feel very lucky to have such friends serving all of us.

By reflecting on his specific experience, Ned was able to access real gratitude, not merely talk about conceptual gratitude. His authenticity moved the audience, Hubbard, and Ned himself, with more than information.

Karen Chang had a similar experience in conveying gratitude for her group of senior vice presidents of Charles Schwab. These were people who had traveled extensively in the previous year, moving from branch to branch in a major change effort. Karen could have merely said, "I want to particularly express my appreciation to the senior vice presidents for their tireless efforts and extensive travel this last year." By convention, that would be acceptable. Rather than staying with convention, Karen did a bit of research and conveyed her feelings this way. "I want to particularly thank the senior vice presidents who made this happen by being on the road. They were gone from their homes an average of fifteen nights a month last year. All of them have families; and believe me, I know that 174 nights is a lot of nights to go to bed without a hug from someone you love. I deeply appreciate them and their families for that."

Magic. She reflected, included herself, was specific, and made it real. Her feelings were obvious, as were the feelings of everyone else in the room. By conveying feelings that came from a real experience, she made the entire episode reflect what she wanted to reflect.

Learning to express authentic gratitude is central to leadership communication and perhaps, as Brother David suggests, a key to living in fullness. Seeking gratitude in the everyday can be enriching to everyone, including you, the leader. Here is an excerpt from the Guide on education. My question was: "Who am I truly grateful for with regard to the education system?"

Sample from the Education Guide

Gratitude: One thing I can say for sure is that I would not be in the position that I am in had I not had the benefit of a couple of great teachers; and in my time, they indeed came out of this public system. I am eternally grateful for their influence in shaping who I am today. My third-grade teacher, Helen Stroup, was a paragon of a self-esteeming woman, and would accept nothing less than my best, even challenging me to a personal race through the times-tables in front of the room. My early mathematics teacher in high school, Ted Thebe, showed enough faith in me to raise my own expectations of what I could do . . . not just in math, but in life, entering me in math contests and helping me prepare on weekends. I'm sure that many people that I will speak to about reform have shared similar experiences and are grateful for them.. My own mother, who only had a high-school education, nonetheless believed in the value of as much education as one could get. It was her focus and persuasion that made it possible for me to be the first and only member of my family to go to university and beyond, something not common in her generation.

Acknowledging Resistance

Your expressions of authentic gratitude will help others recognize your humanity, but might do little to give them an experience of your empathy with their own points of view. Resistance and disagreement are natural