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## TUNING THE VOICE OF LEADERSHIP

The true test of success for leaders is not the amount of money they make, the price of their stock or the size of their businesses. Success is determined by how effectively they are able to communicate their vision and apply their experience to their enterprise. To meet the demands of business—and have a lasting impact on their organizations—leaders must speak with clarity and win the trust of others. When they know how to do this, they have what we call the voice of leadership.

The 2004 presidential campaign is an opportunity to see how important the voice of leadership is. Clarity and trust are the critical elements of any political campaign. Interestingly enough, when voters are interviewed about a candidate, they give you an impression—which may seem like it's based on little that is tangible. How do they arrive at their conclusions? The fact is we base these impressions on very real elements—what we see and hear. Successful candidates have to project ideas with clarity, and have to be seen as trustworthy, or they cannot win. The long, grueling nature of a presidential contest gives us voters a chance to weigh information and decide.

You may not be out to win votes, but if you want to lead, you must project an authentic voice of leadership, too. This year, we are devoting the pages of the Credibility Report to voice of leadership stories, insights and practical advice—everything you need to develop an authentic, powerful “voice”. Our goal is to provide information about how to assess your voice, develop new skills and enhance your leadership through better communication.

First, let's define the voice of leadership. It is an authentic, powerful way of communicating—unique to each of us. There is no formula for the voice of leadership—no two leaders are the same—but all good leaders have certain assets and competencies that determine the effectiveness of their voices.

Effective leaders have two powerful assets that provide the foundation for their overall success: They have vision—the ability to imagine, conceptualize and articulate future hope and opportunity. And they have experience—the skill and talent acquired by doing.

But vision and experience are not enough. There are two factors that determine how effectively leaders will be able to communicate their vision and apply their experience:

Trust—the most critical element in producing positive human behavior is willingness. If people are unwilling, they will not give their unwavering support to leadership initiatives. Trust is a basic building block of willingness. If people trust their leaders and believe the information provided by their leaders, they will be willingly to follow.

Clarity—if the message of leadership is not clear the team will not know how to do the things leadership asks of them. Confusion will dilute effort and desired results will be diminished.

Trust is a firm belief in the reliability, truth or strength of a person or thing. When people trust you, they have a confident expectation about you. A person in a position of trust has a responsibility arising from that trust. In fact, when we trust people, we give over power to them; that's why we call a property legally entrusted to a person a "trust." We refer to a person who holds and administers property in trust for another is a "trustee." People who are trustworthy can act, administer, and move forward with the full cooperation of others. Trust allows a leader to do what needs to be done, with the support of those who need to do the work.

Clarity is the act of making something clear, or easier to understand. In a lab, when you want to give clarity to a liquid, you remove the impurities such as fats through a process of heating. The process of achieving clarity in communication is comparable. To express an idea with clarity, we begin with an intellectual exercise, where we "cook" an idea until the impurities are removed. What is left is transparent thought. Ideas that are transparent are easier to express, and more readily understood. Clarity is usually achieved when we begin with an intellectual process—observing, considering, reasoning, comparing and contrasting, reflecting, then articulating and communicating a pure message. A transparent idea is easily understood; the truth behind it is easily perceived. It is clear and unmistakable.

When Eliot Spitzer first went after mutual fund companies for trading practices that cost consumers billions, people didn't really understand—most of us didn't know how fees were set or care about how trades happened. Spitzer succeeded in building credibility because he was so good at explaining what happened and why it was wrong. He proved you don't need an MBA to understand corruption in financial services. Once he laid out the case in simple language and stark terms, the press and the public got it. His investigation caught and it became too big to ignore.

Clarity and trust are the keys to tuning the voice of leadership. Over the coming months, we hope you'll read and find useful information that will help you tune your voice—develop a total package of skills that help you articulate your vision and bring unity and focus to your organization. We welcome your questions and comments and hope you will let us know about communication topics that will help you become the best you can be.