

YOU KNOW

YOU NEED TO LEARN IT, but how?

Learning any language, particularly the Language of Leading (LOL), is a bit like learning to play a new sport. Like any discipline, there is a process to learning the skills that takes commitment, time, and practice . . . and patience. Part of speaking the “LOL” is knowing there are two halves: (1) your words, and (2) the way in which you engage with those around you. Both are equally important—after all, leading assumes you have someone following you!

WHERE DOES ONE BEGIN?

When I started teaching college courses, I quickly realized everyone has their own style of learning. Since each student develops differently; there is no perfect way to start. However, there are some clear steps you can take to initiate learning and speaking in the language of leading.

1. Take Inventory

The best way to start anything is to take stock of where you currently stand. This step is often eye-opening, and necessary to understand where progress needs to begin. I’ve developed a complimentary self-assessment so that you can do a quick self-check to discover your strengths and weaknesses in public speaking. In addition, it’s important to begin assessing your level of emotional intelligence (EQ). A critical piece of effective leadership is one’s EQ—their ability to not only identify and control personal emotions, but to understand, empathize with, and react to others’ emotions. Taking an honest look at your EQ can be

difficult. We all have areas that are natural strengths; we also all have areas of weakness which can make our interactions with the world around us more difficult. I provide a number of resources for professionals looking to increase their emotional intelligence—visit www.chuckgarcia.com to learn more and to take the public speaking assessment.

2. Know Your Learning Style

In conjunction with identifying your strengths and weaknesses, understanding your learning style is extremely important. For example, if you are a visual learner, start with videos instead of a book of selected leaders whose style you want emulate (can’t go wrong on TED talks). If you prefer to read before you practice, there are plenty of books I recommend to clients to help them appreciate and internalize how leaders speak. A few choices beyond my own, *A Climb to the Top*, include *Talk Like TED* by Carmine Gallo, *The Power of Communication* by Helio Fred Garcia, and *The World’s Greatest Speeches: Fourth Enlarged Edition*.

3. Internalize and then Practice . . .

But Not Everything

One of the biggest mistakes we can make when trying to develop new skills or make significant changes is taking on too much all at once. When we do this, we set ourselves up for disappointment. Instead, take things on slowly. When I introduce the Ten Commandments of Great Presentations to clients, I

encourage them try one or two tactics. For instance, try writing a speech using the Rule of Three. Or, for another, I may suggest they start recording themselves if they are more likely to stumble and lean on filler words. Doing this allows them to eventually eliminate these stumbled/filler words when they see evidence of how draining it can be to listen to it. By picking just a few areas to focus on, you will successfully improve in those areas, making you that much better than you were before. When you feel comfortable, move onto a few more. This is applicable to any characteristic you feel you need improvement in. Before you know it, you'll be lightyears ahead of where you were, simply by taking one reasonable bite at a time.

4. Listen to Others, then Listen to Yourself

Note your use of language in any particular situation. Are you choosing powerful words that inspire and gets other excited? Do they want to hear more? Or are your words listless, and not compelling anyone to listen? You may not feel like it, but in some ways, a compelling leader and speaker is like an entertainer. Like a musician or actor, their ability to be successful requires an energy or rapport that is shared between them and their audience. Have you ever been to a concert where the crowd was electric? You weren't the only one feeling that, the entertainer can feel it too, and responds in kind with a powerful performance. Likewise, you've probably attended an event where the energy was stale, making it difficult to engage or be interested. Your interactions in the office or on a stage

with a larger audience are the same. Understand your audience, feel their energy regarding the topic at hand, and in return choose to communicate in a way that will motivate them to listen and engage.

Learning to lead and communicate more effectively is a skill to be developed, one which will take commitment, time, practice, and—above all else—patience with yourself. You already have strengths to leverage as you continue to improve yourself. Acknowledge those strengths and allow them to help you improve in other areas. Just know that every effort you make is contributing to you being a more effective leader in the workplace and in your life.



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A 25-year veteran of Wall Street, he spent 14 years in sales and marketing at Bloomberg in a variety of leadership positions. He was Director of Business Development at BlackRock Solutions, an arm of the world's largest investment manager, and was a Managing Director at Citadel, a prestigious alternative investment manager.

He is also a mountaineer and has climbed some of the world's tallest peaks, including Mount Kilimanjaro, Mount Elbrus, the Matterhorn, as well as mountains in Alaska and the Andes.