LEADERSHIP can be daunting. Many people are afraid of public speaking; some lack the confidence to assert themselves; others don’t value their own opinions or skills enough to think that anyone else would want to follow them. Leadership roles and responsibilities can seem vague, and the qualities that make a good leader are often elusive. Frequently, when Outward Bound instructors are addressing the concept of leadership to a group of our students, many of them express doubt about their ability to be a leader. “I’m not very charismatic,” they say, or “I’m a better follower.”

But when we explain leadership this way—“Leadership is seeing what needs to be done and getting a group of people to do it”—the students usually get it. Suddenly being a leader doesn’t seem so intimidating or out of reach. Student leaders quickly learn to identify what needs to be done and organize their peers to do it, whether it is packing up camp, following a compass bearing, or reaching the top of a distant summit. What’s more, really good leaders not only get others to do something, but they get them to want to do it.

In The Leadership Challenge, organizational leadership consultants Jim Kouzes and Barry Posner in 2002 provide a more sophisticated definition, calling leadership “the art of mobilizing others to want to struggle for shared aspirations.” Once you understand the underlying goal of the best leadership—getting people to do something enthusiastically—then you can think of all leadership strategies as a means of achieving this end.

The first questions you must ask yourself are these: “Am I ready to project an image of competence and skill? Do I have what it takes to be a good leader?” You might begin by simply asking yourself, “Do I have the ability to mobilize people to struggle toward shared goals?”

Think back on recent leadership roles you’ve held. Have you motivated a group of people to do something? Led a production team at work? Started a volunteer firefighting squad in your community? Served as president of your local Parent Teacher Association? Volunteered to be your kids’ scout leader? You may even have some leadership experience that you have forgotten about or that you have considered unnoteworthy. Were you the class president in high school? Or the captain of your sports team? Did you lead a church youth group? Or have you started a book club in your community? Consider any experience in which you motivated a group of people to do something.

Whatever the situation, it’s possible that you already have some leadership experience or background on which you can draw. Although your “followers” and the particular situation might be different, the principles of good leadership remain the same, and the lessons you learned in your previous leadership roles can be applied to leadership positions you’ll take on in the future, along with some new ideas incorporated from the Outward Bound leadership methodology.

In their book Effective Leadership in Adventure Programming, outdoor leadership experts Simon Priest and Michael Gass refer to leadership as “a process of influence based on power.” As a leader, you hold a tremendous amount of power, which you use to influence the people in your groups.
You will adopt or embody many different leadership qualities and strategies, but ultimately all of them represent your expression of your leadership power. How you choose to use this power defines and characterizes your leadership style.

In 1990 the International Peace Climb, formed under U.S. leadership, was a group of climbers who worked together to summit Mount Everest and to celebrate the recent rapprochement of three of the great former national rivals: Russia, China, and the United States. It was agreed that each rope team would have a Russian, a Chinese, and an American climber and that they would all cooperate to summit together.

The group met for a practice climb on Mount Rainier. The weather turned bad, and as the group descended, the Chinese climbers got totally disoriented and were lost for some time on the mountain. The American team leader determined that these Chinese climbers did not have the expertise to climb Mount Everest and sought replacement climbers. Quickly recovering from this shock of their climbers being removed from the team, the Chinese brought in a number of talented Tibetan climbers to replace the Chinese climbers.

Once the new team began climbing Mount Everest, it quickly became apparent that the style of teamwork modeled by the Americans was something fairly foreign to the Russians, who were mostly speed-climbing champions from Europe and the Caucasus Mountains. The Russians did not have confidence that the entire group was going to summit. Their idea of a summit bid involved the strongest climbers moving quickly up the mountain while the rest of the group worked to support their efforts by moving gear and establishing high-altitude camps. The Russians attempted to climb quickly to high altitudes, but they were not interested in ferrying the loads up to establish the different high camps. Consequently, the climbing leader had to rely on the American climbers and the Tibetans to ferry loads and to keep the expedition progressing up the mountain.

With the blessing of good weather, twenty of twenty-one climbers in the International Peace Climb reached the summit of Mount Everest over a period of three days, and the Russians’ theory about only the fastest climbers being able to summit was proven wrong. Although all members of the group did not demonstrate the cooperation that the campaign had been designed to promote, the expedition’s summit bid was wildly successful due not only to the extra efforts of the Americans and Tibetans but, even more importantly, to the leader’s ability to make the best of a potentially bad situation.

When faced with the diverging interests of his team members, the climbing leader of the International Peace Climb, Ian Wade—a longtime Outward Bound instructor and skilled mountaineer—had to decide how best to approach the lack of Russian cooperation in order to meet the expedition’s goals. Although the expedition was designed to promote cooperation among international rivals, the leader knew that the climb would receive a lot of international attention and that attention would be more positive—and, thus, the climb would be deemed more successful—if everyone on the team reached the top. The ideal situation would have been for the leader to convince the Russians to ferry loads and for the entire team to share equally in the tasks involved in reaching the summit. The leader could also have told the Russians that they must ferry loads or risk being removed from the expedition, but this would likely have bred resentment and a dissolution of team unity, perhaps even resulting in unsupportive and dangerous climbing conditions. The leader was unsuccessful in persuading the Russians to cooperate fully, and he didn’t want to use his leadership power to give the Russians
an ultimatum, so he eventually compromised by using the Americans and Tibetans to pick up the slack in ferrying loads. The Russians met their personal goals of climbing quickly, the team met its goal of getting everyone up the mountain, and the expedition succeeded under the skilled management of the leader, who was faced with the potential for the expedition to dissolve when the Russians wouldn’t cooperate. A difficult leadership situation was resolved successfully because of strong leadership skills and the sacrifice of others willing to follow the leader’s plan.

The team leader’s decision not to wield his power to coerce the Russians into something they were adamantly opposed to was deliberate. On a climbing expedition, a team leader’s decisions serve as the ultimate authority, and in fact, one of the main reasons that climbing expeditions always elect a team leader is because fractious situations and disagreements occur on nearly every expedition. In this situation, the leader had to decide which decision would threaten the expedition more: coercing some semblance of cooperation or allowing the spirit of cooperation to be compromised. He decided to use his leadership power to keep the expedition moving harmoniously up the mountain, rather than insisting on cooperation and perhaps gaining it at face value but likely also breeding a slew of additional headaches that would slow progress and jeopardize the success of the expedition even further.

STEPPING UP TO FILL A LEADERSHIP VACUUM

Groups without leadership make people uncomfortable. Even in situations wherein no leadership is really needed, after a little time has passed, the subtle search for a leader will begin. When a leader does emerge, the rest of the people in the group are willing to follow, at least until circumstances dictate a change.

For example, think of the classic long line out the door of the women’s restroom in any public facility. Women will stand in line for long minutes, frustrated but waiting their turn. A few longing glances might be cast at the neighboring empty men’s bathroom, but no one goes beyond wishing that someone else would break the ice and use it first. So when some brave soul steps forth and actually uses the men’s room, suddenly the situation improves, as half the women leave the long line and join the ad hoc leader in using the men’s room.

Here’s another example. If you’ve ever been one of the first people on the scene of a car accident, you’ll know that it goes something like this: Everyone mills about nervously, wanting to help but unsure how to begin. People cluster in groups, quietly wondering among themselves what happened. Finally someone arrives and begins giving directions—"You call 9-1-1. You get everyone to move their vehicles to the shoulder. You go get the first-aid kit from the trunk of my car."—and suddenly everyone has a purpose. People are happy to help out, once someone else tells them what to do.

Because people are more comfortable in groups with leadership, if you have taken responsibility for the success of a group (whether it be friends, clients, or a group of colleagues), participants or followers will automatically look to you with some degree of confidence and respect. They believe that if you have the confidence to take on this responsibility, you probably have the skills to carry it off. Or they instinctively understand that if someone else has enough faith in your skills to put you in a leadership position, they should trust that assessment. You will retain this instinctive trust and respect until you do something to jeopardize it.

ESTABLISHING CREDIBILITY AND MAINTAINING INTEGRITY AS A LEADER

A survey by Seth Godin, described in *Wisdom, Inc.*, covered 20,000 middle and top-level managers. He asked them to rate the most important virtues of leaders. The results echo the values deeply embedded in Outward Bound. The most important value they found was ethics, and the second most important value listed by these executives was
A few longing neighbors empty the ice and use it beyond wishing the situation up. “They lied,” someone like you, wanting me. People cluster around themselves as they arrive and all 9-1-1. You get to the shoulder. The trunk of my car has a purpose. Someone else is portable in a role model for friends, clients, staff or followers, with some degree of belief that if you’re responsible for it. Or they judge someone else in a leader that assessment. And respect it.

**Avoiding Leadership Failures**

Leadership breakdowns occur in all types of leadership situations, and the collapse of integrity or ethics is usually the root cause. In 1992, Wayne Calloway, the chairman and chief executive officer of PepsiCo Inc., addressed this issue in a speech he gave to a conference of the National-American Wholesale Grocers Association. He said that he had noticed a disturbing trend among the company’s young recruits—they weren’t getting very far as managers. When the company studied these young employees to find out why, the results were surprising:

“The biggest reasons our bright young people fail have nothing to do with intelligence, or where they went to school, or even how well they know their jobs,” Calloway said. “The biggest reasons for failure were traceable to one thing—flawed values.” He named arrogance as a major problem: people assuming they’re smarter than anyone else, so they don’t listen to others or their ideas. In this way, arrogance kills teamwork and learning, stopping both the individual and the organization from making progress.

“The other reasons for failure for these otherwise excellent people were along the same lines: lack of loyalty, lack of perseverance, lack of commitment.”

Note that none of these six reasons has anything to do with education, intelligence, or experience. They all have to do with character, integrity, and values—how you conduct your life and what’s important to you.

No matter why leaders fail, their failures generally occur in one of two ways: (1) when there is inconsistency in the leader’s expression of the group values (for example, when the leader doesn’t model those values or is only intermittently committed to upholding them), or (2) when there is dissent among group members regarding their commitment to these values (for example, when not all participants share the group values).

**When a Leader Inconsistently Expresses Group Values**

To illustrate the first way in which leadership fails, let’s say you preach the virtues of environmental responsibility, telling your participants that they must make as little impact on the natural world as possible. But then they see you breaking branches on a tree to make room for your tent, and they begin to lose respect for you. If you frequently fail to walk your talk, your credibility declines, you increasingly lose any influence you once had over your participants, and
eventually you will no longer be able to motivate
them to act.

Joe’s participants loved him. He was lots
of fun, full of jokes, quick to start a game.
An exceptional climber and mountaineer,
Joe had outstanding outdoor skills and a
never-ending supply of interesting stories.
He had explained all of the organization’s
rules to the participants, but he didn’t take
some of those rules seriously, and he didn’t
really care if the participants slipped up once
in a while.

For example, participants were supposed
to pack up and carry out any leftovers, but
a couple of times the group threw some
macaroni down the outhouse hole; Joe just
pretended not to notice. Another time, a
couple of kids were smoking in one of the
tents, but Joe just said loudly, “Hmm, that’s
funny, I think I smell cigarette smoke. I must
be imagining it.” Joe was cool—the kids
could really relate to him.

Things got a little chaotic after a while,
because nobody really seemed to be in
charge. The trip goal was to climb a few
small peaks in preparation for a technical
ascent of a dormant volcano. Joe would try
to wake the participants up early, but they
all just grumbled and went back to sleep.
The group hiked fewer and fewer miles each
day, until finally the ending destination had
to be changed because there was no way they
could make up all those miles. Meals were
sporadic, cooked carelessly and eaten hastily,
but nobody really cared. Besides, it was fun
just sleeping in, swimming, playing games,
and laughing at Joe’s stories.

Joe’s participants went home full of
smiles and stories about their wacky leader.
It was only in later years that any of Joe’s
participants wondered how such a brilliant
mountaineer could have failed to lead his
participants to the top of even one peak.

In Joe’s situation, his participants continued to
like him, but he quickly lost leadership credibility
because he did not model his organization’s val-
ues of challenge and environmental responsibility.
Joe’s group experienced a leadership breakdown
because Joe failed to uphold the values that his
participants and his organization expected him to
model: respect for the environment and a sense of
challenge and adventure.

The temptation to compromise on your (or
your organization’s) values is surprisingly tem-
pting, particularly for new leaders who want to make
sure that their group likes them. Turning a blind
eye to a participant who is burying his leftover
dinner in a hole is a lot easier than confronting him
about it and holding him accountable to an envi-
ronmental ethic. Laughing at a potentially offensive
joke around the water cooler creates less conflict
than addressing appropriate professional behavior
and respect for others’ feelings. But ultimately,
although these failures to hold followers accountable
to a set of values might result in an easier rapport
with them, it does not result in leaders establishing
themselves as people worth following.

When a Team Has an Inconsistent Commitment
to Group Values

In the second way that leadership breaks down,
dissent erupts among group members regarding
their level of commitment to common values. In
Outward Bound, if the students are not led to
accept certain basic values, to work together to
achieve a common goal, and to confront challenges
to the best of their ability, there will be dissension
even if the leader models these values.

For example, let’s say that one of your
company’s requirements is that every team must
complete some pro bono work each quarter. As
the team manager, you organize the pro bono
work and expect everyone to participate. But
when the projects arrive, some of your team
members balk, saying that they didn’t take this
job just to work for free. They refuse to help out
the team with the projects.
With two groups of employees subscribing to different values regarding pro bono work, you are forced to choose between the two sets of values because you can’t force people to volunteer. You have a professional responsibility to uphold your organization’s pro bono work ethic, and thus you must support the employees willing to be full participants in the company goals. At the same time you must seek to hold all the employees accountable in some way to the value of pro bono work.

This type of leadership breakdown is what occurred on the International Peace Climb described above: some members of the team were unwilling to commit to, or had a different interpretation of, the team’s value of cooperation. The team leader was faced with a leadership breakdown and had to decide between three options: whether to let the expedition dissolve, try bringing about the unlikely result of the Russians deciding to ferry loads, or to reinterpret the definition of cooperation. He ultimately reinterpreted the definition of cooperation, by deciding that cooperation and expedition success could be achieved if the Russians climbed quickly while the rest of the team ferried loads.

USING YOUR POWER JUDICIOUSLY

In leadership situations, there are constant opportunities to either set yourself apart from your group or to join it. Let the decision about when to separate yourself from your group always be a deliberate one, one that you make in the interest of asserting your authority for a specific purpose rather than clinging to your power simply because you have it.

Joining in Your Team’s Work

Remember how effective it can be to join your group when appropriate.

When I was associate director of Colorado Outward Bound and supervisor of all programs, I participated in many river-rafting trips on the Green and Colorado rivers in Utah; these were some of my favorite adventures. The river staff was always great fun and very hard workers. Although I did not have the paddling skills to qualify as an instructor on those courses, I was still a staff person and always pitched in and helped set up camp, organized and participated in cooking crews, loaded boats, and whatever else was needed that was not technical teaching.

On rivers, there are strict protocols about taking out all garbage, including human waste. Rafters are required to bring out with them receptacles for different types of garbage, and they are required to be diligent about not contaminating the rivers and their surroundings with human excrement. Therefore, portable latrines for everyone to use are set up a little away from the campsite. These latrines are always situated out of sight of fellow campers but with a good view of the surroundings. In those days they were made up of several layers of garbage bags within a rectangular “ammo tin” (ammunition boxes scavenged from army surplus stores) with a toilet seat on top.

Every morning, these ammo-tin latrines were sealed up and placed on the supply boat, which carried all the gear but had no students on it. Washing the toilet seat and sealing up the latrine to be sure it didn’t leak was something we all took turns doing, myself included.

The end of a river course, called the take-out, is a place where a road comes down to the river and there is usually a boat ramp of some type. After all the participants were met by a bus to take them back to civilization, the staff said farewell to them and was then faced with sorting and stowing the gear, dealing with all the garbage, deflating the rafts, and, oh yes, dealing with the latrine! So, being the most senior staff, I felt obliged to volunteer to carry the very full sealed plastic bags over
to the designated disposal placed specifically for that purpose. It was a nasty, necessary chore, but sometimes leadership is like that! It was the best gift of thanks I could give to the hard-working instructors!

—Joan Welsh, former president of the Hurricane Island Outward Bound School

One of the most effective leadership strategies for building trust is to minimize your own use of power except when the situation calls for dynamic leadership, assertive role modeling, or executive decisions. The inclination to minimize your position of influence is usually instinctive for compassionate leaders, but even if it’s not your natural tendency, you can learn how to maintain a balance of joining your group and separating yourself from it.

One of the best examples of a leader who understood how to balance power with teamwork was the polar explorer Ernest Shackleton. At a time when the common practice on ships was for the officers and crew to eat separately (with the officers dining on gourmet meals served on fine linen while the crew ate stews and porridges), Shackleton’s

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SHACKLETON’S LEADERSHIP LESSONS

1. Before leaving Antarctica, Shackleton arranged for a number of his officers to conduct independent research in the Antarctic, which would later serve as a basis for their work.
2. Shackleton often left his officers in charge when he went to the ice, which encouraged them to take responsibility for their own decisions.
3. Shackleton’s leadership style was democratic, as he regularly consulted with his officers and crew to make decisions.
4. Shackleton believed in the importance of strong, decisive leadership in challenging situations.
5. Shackleton was a skilled navigator and strategist, which allowed him to make tough decisions and lead his team through difficult situations.
6. Shackleton’s leadership style was based on trust, which allowed him to build strong relationships with his crew.
7. Shackleton’s leadership style was characterized by his ability to inspire his team and lead them to success.
8. Shackleton’s leadership style was based on his own experiences and the lessons he learned from previous expeditions.
9. Shackleton’s leadership style was characterized by his ability to adapt to changing circumstances and make quick decisions.
10. Shackleton’s leadership style was based on his own values and principles, which he communicated to his team and motivated them to achieve their goals.
men all ate the same food together, which fostered a sense of companionship and group identity.

Similarly, Shackleton's expedition was equipped with a limited number of toasty-warm reindeer-hide sleeping bags and a greater number of wool ones that quickly grew soggy in the marine climate. When Shackleton's ship sank off the Antarctic coast and the men abandoned the Endurance for the lifeboats, Shackleton and his officers rotated in and out of the wool bags with the rest of the crew, despite the fact that no one would have much grumbled if the captain and the officers had kept the finer reindeer bags for their own use.

Shackleton had an unerring sense of small actions that would have large effects on team unity and trust, and he maximized these opportunities, taking his turn chopping ice, killing seals for food, or hauling boats overland with the rest of his men. Yet he still maintained his authority and ability to command, perhaps in part because his men so respected his work ethic and sense of fairness.

Separating Yourself from Your Team
There is a delicate balance to achieve here. Getting into the trenches with your team will establish you as a caring, knowledgeable, and humble leader, and it will rally your team around you. But you can’t join your team in every aspect of their work, or you will neglect your leadership duties. You also need to establish yourself as an authority figure so that your lead will be followed and your decisions respected. You signed on as the captain, not as the crew.

However, the way in which you separate from your team is also tricky. Isolating yourself from your team can make you seem superficial and create an “us versus them” dynamic. If you squirrel yourself away in your glass-windowed office and never set foot on the factory floor, you send the message of a great power imbalance between your team and the “big boss.” If you get yourself your own hotel room while your team squeezes in four to a room, you’re sending the message that your comfort is more important than theirs. If you use your participants’ first names but expect them to call you “Mr.” or “Ms.” (unless you’re working with kids in specific contexts), you’re conveying the idea that you are worthy of more respect than they are.

One of the many wonderful things about the wilderness environment is that it is the great equalizer. If it’s raining, the leader is getting wet, too. If the mosquitoes are biting, the leader tastes just as juicy as the participants. Participants notice this and feel more kinship with their leaders when they feel as though their leaders can understand them and empathize with them.

Coaching Rather than Commanding
If your intention, like Outward Bound’s, is to teach your participants or followers the skills they need to have some degree of independence, you must move beyond having them respect you simply because you are in a position of authority. Instead, try to enable your participants to view you as a coach who helps them learn the skills they need to reach group and personal goals under their own leadership. To do this, you must use your influence as a leader to instruct and mentor rather than direct and command.

This is a tricky balance to achieve, because you want and need your followers to respect your authority (particularly when you’re working with difficult groups), but you also need them to be able to separate from your authority and begin to respect the leadership within the group. You don’t want anarchy, and you don’t want the type of leadership that emerges within a group because the leader is seen as ineffectual. You want to be able to step back in when necessary and have your followers listen to and respect your decisions at any time, but you also want them to learn to operate completely autonomously without your involvement.

If your followers always and only see you as
an authority figure, their success will always be connected to you. They will miss out on the unique sense of confidence that comes with succeeding on their own and discovering that plus est en vous—that they have more in them than they knew. Your followers’ esteem for you needs to be based on something more than your position of authority.

EXpressing your leadership presence

Often when people imagine a leader, they envision someone other than themselves. If they are thinking about an outdoor leader, they picture a brawny, tanned, (and frequently) male, superhero. If they envision a corporate leader, they see a tall, dignified, attractive, mature man or woman in a suit.

Sometimes all it takes is a clipboard for people to identify you as a leader. When people are uncertain or lost, they look around them for leadership. If someone has a certain aura—or even something as innocuous as a clipboard—implying leadership, people gravitate toward that person for guidance.

I frequently carry a small notebook around with me to public events such as meetings or hearings, in case there is anything I want to jot down. Inevitably, someone identifies me as a leader and begins asking me questions about the process or purpose of the meeting. Even when I protest that I am among the uninitiated, just as they are, they often regard me skeptically, as if I must be trying to abdicate my leadership role. With an air of confidence and a leadership “tool” such as a notebook, a leader has no chance to just blend into the crowd.

—Barbara, instructor for an American Management Association seminar

But most leaders look just like you and me and everybody else. That is, leaders come in a variety of appearances: they’re tall, short, young, old, beautiful, plain, strong, frail. So if most leaders look so ordinary, what identifies them as leaders? The answer is their leadership presence—the way leaders’ manners and appearances imbue them with an authority that causes them to shine, and other people to identify them as leaders.

Think about the way that actors who are satirists mimic political figures. They never mention the name of the person they’re imitating and often look nothing like the politicians they’re imitating, but by mimicking another person’s tone of voice, speech patterns, and gestures (albeit often grossly exaggerated), satirists are able to convey to their audience who they are mimicking. They are, in a sense, replicating a politician’s leadership presence.

Your leadership presence is a compilation of your tone of voice, your body language, your physical appearance, the way you dress, and the way you engage other people. There are hundreds of ways to effectively express your leadership presence and hundreds of ways to combine the characteristics that comprise leadership presence. That explains why some great leaders are statuesque with booming voices and some great leaders are tiny and soft-spoken. Some wear thousand-dollar shoes and others shop at thrift stores. Some gesture dramatically while others are self-restrained. Some use humor, others are somber, some are outgoing, others are reserved. Some are in wheelchairs, others are deaf or blind. The effective ones, though, have in common that they are leaders with a presence that works for their particular leadership situation.

For a long time women have struggled and today struggle still to achieve positions of leadership traditionally held by men. Initially, women thought they needed to adopt men’s leadership styles and presence to be taken seriously as leaders. But as social equality between men and women has grown and women in leadership roles have become more common, many women realize that they are more effective leading with their own styles than they are leading under borrowed styles and cultivating a leadership presence not their own.

Also, for a long time the most important leadership positions—in business, education, and
politics—were held by older people, who theoretically had a life perspective and wisdom not present in younger generations. But as energetic young people with innovative ideas began transforming companies, schools, and politics, the image of the elder statesman expanded to make room for the vision of the young person who has a different—but equally effective—leadership presence.

The same can be said for any minority group—whether based on gender, race, sexual preference, religion, or ethnicity. Opportunities are not yet equal and much discrimination still exists, but the leaders of tomorrow aren’t necessarily going to be the people with the highest educational degrees and loudest voices. They’re instead going to be people of all colors, from all backgrounds, with unique and personal leadership presences. But most important, the leaders of tomorrow will be the people who express, model, and uphold positive values and ethics common to much of society.

Enhancing Your Leadership Presence

Everything you say or do and everything about the way you look affects your leadership presence. Because we’re growing accustomed to leaders coming in all sorts of outer packaging, few aspects about a person are inherently positive or negative. Still, at the same time, everything makes a statement. White hair says one thing, dyed or bleached hair says another. Tattoos speak loudly, as do unusual or multiple body piercings. Cracking your knuckles communicates a message, as does biting your fingernails. Calling people “dear” says something, as does referring to a coed group as “you guys.”

You don’t have control over every aspect of your appearance, so it’s important to make the most of the things that you do have control over, whether they are physical attributes, tone of voice, or mannerisms. Here are some tips for enhancing your leadership presence:

Dress and groom yourself appropriately. Although we try not to be, humans are superficial characters and make judgments based on appearance. So make sure that the image you’re presenting is the one you’re intending. Dress appropriately for the situation, regardless of your leadership position. For example, the CEO of Outward Bound might occasionally wear shorts around the office or in the field, but if out on a fund-raising trip, a business suit is appropriate attire. Consider the appropriateness of visible body art and jewelry, and if it seems inappropriate for a particular leadership situation, play it down.

The message here is not to hide your true self or to attempt to be somebody you aren’t, but, instead, to present yourself from the start in a way that gives little reason for your followers to judge or be offended by you. Once they get to know you and you have established yourself as a credible leader, then you can relax your standards of appearance as you deem appropriate within the organizational culture.

Make eye contact. One of the quickest ways to establish your leadership presence is to make eye contact with your followers. Making eye contact takes confidence, and it says to the follower, “I see you and I want to engage with you.” It makes followers feel validated and feel as though you’re worthy of their respect. It also makes you seem trustworthy, open, and honest.

Maximize your best leadership attributes. Do you have an unerring sense of humor that helps groups relax and diffuses difficult situations? Are you able to foster a quick sense of intimacy and trust among participants? Do you have a particularly clear and coherent way of presenting information? Your best leadership attributes will greatly enhance your overall leadership presence, so take advantage of them. Become aware of your best leadership attributes and use them consciously until they become second nature.

Be open about your shortcomings. You don’t need to introduce yourself to a new group by saying, “I’m Bob and I’m not very good at letting go of control,” but neither do you need to attempt to hide your weaknesses. Once you have established yourself as a worthy leader, it can actually be very productive to share your shortcomings with participants.
Showing vulnerability makes you more real and more approachable, and the honesty and risk required to share such information shows you to be a confident leader willing to take emotional risks.

**Maintain appropriate boundaries.** Many people are uncomfortable when strangers touch them (a hand on the shoulder, a pat on the arm), even if the intention is not threatening. Similarly, most people are uncomfortable when others stand too close to them to speak. Step back and give people space until they invite you into it. Be sensitive to cultural differences regarding what constitutes appropriate boundaries.

**Avoid nervous habits.** Cracking your knuckles, wringing your hands, chewing the insides of your lips—all of these are nervous habits that will annoy your followers as well as communicate that you have a sense of anxiety or a lack of confidence. Sometimes these habits are so distracting to followers that they miss half of what you are saying because they’re wondering how many more times you will toss your hair back during the course of your speech.

**Watch out for potentially offensive language.** You probably have a pretty good sense about blatant insults or loaded language that would offend people. But watch out for seemingly innocuous language that can alienate individuals or entire groups. For example, many women are put off by a leader’s use of “you guys” to refer to a coed group as a whole.

### Using Your Leadership Presence Effectively

One of the most important aspects of your leadership presence is figuring out how to use it to your best advantage. Frank Fields (not his real name), the CEO of a Fortune 100 company, got involved in Outward Bound at his wife, Elizabeth’s (not hers), urging after she’d had a very moving Outward Bound experience (recounted in Chapter 6, Finding Courage, Overcoming Fear). Here is Frank’s experience using his leadership presence to effect a particular outcome.

*Frank and Elizabeth adopted twenty-three teenagers under the “I Have a Dream” pro-

gram in the South Bronx, agreeing that they would fund these students’ college education if they could complete high school. Frank and Elizabeth also agreed to spend one day each month with the group doing various types of adventurous things together.

One Saturday morning, Frank was playing basketball outdoors in jeans and a t-shirt with a number of these students. He got a phone call from someone at the high school saying that one of the students had been arrested and was in jail and asking Frank to come down and see what he could do to help. So Frank went down to the South Bronx police station and said, “I’m Frank Fields, and I’m here to see so-and-so to see what I can do.”

The desk sergeant said, “Yeah, Buster. Go ahead and have a seat over there.”

Well, an hour went by, an hour and a half went by, and Frank went back to the desk sergeant and said, “Look, I came here to see so-and-so and no one has come for me.”

The desk sergeant said, “Yeah, yeah. Well, have a seat. We’ll get to you.”

At this point, Frank went back out to his car and got his blue suit, white shirt, tie, and proper shoes and went to the men’s room and changed into his business attire. He went back to the desk sergeant and said, “I am Frank Fields, CEO of such-and-such company, and I would like to see so-and-so, now!”

The desk sergeant said, “Yes, sir. Right away.”

Sure enough, Frank was ushered in and allowed to have an interview with the young person, and in good time was able to get the student released on Frank’s recognizance.

Unfortunately, our society oftentimes operates on values that are responsive to power rather than to what is fair. Knowing this, you can sometimes use your leadership presence to effect the influence you desire.
ADAPTING YOUR LEADERSHIP STYLE

Effective leadership takes many different forms. Napoleon Bonaparte was an effective leader, but in a much different way than was Mohandas Gandhi, Queen Elizabeth I, or Nelson Mandela. Outward Bound recognizes that different instructors lead effectively in many different ways, and these different approaches, referred to as an instructor's "leadership style," are worthy and valued.

Think about how your participants or followers would describe you as a leader. Dynamic? Quiet? Authoritarian? Laid-back? Your leadership style is simply the way in which you go about achieving your leadership objectives—or, to use the definitions of leadership described earlier, the way in which you use your power to influence your followers.

In one of my first courses as a very young Outward Bound instructor, I was faced with a potentially difficult group. I was about to teach a twenty-eight-day course in the all-male youth-at-risk program we used to run in Maine, and I could tell from the participants' medical files that this was going to be a group of pretty tough seventeen-year-old boys. I decided to establish an aura of authority and discipline around myself by wearing mirrored sunglasses—which I ran out and purchased two hours before the course started—for the first couple of days of the course. By hiding the occasional uncertainty that inevitably showed on my face in the early part of a course, I thought, I could create an illusion of confidence.

The whole plan backfired, of course; the students saw right through me. I was so busy trying to be someone else that I was unable to do any of the things that had worked well for me in the past.

—Ashley Lodato, Outward Bound staff since 1986

Most leaders tend to have a preferred leadership style, usually the one that comes most naturally to them or the one with which they have had the most success. Your preferred leadership style can usually be identified somewhere along a continuum of leadership approaches, ranging from very directive, highly involved methods to a quite relaxed, laissez-faire manner, illustrated in Figure 2:

| directive | democratic | consensual | laissez-faire |

A directive approach marks a leader who makes most decisions alone and exerts overarching personal influence over the group.

A democratic approach is characterized by a leader who shares power with others, involving group members in decision making and problem solving. A democratic leader might consult with either the entire group or a few group members before making a decision; such a leader might also turn some decisions over to the group completely.

A consensual approach implies that the leader facilitates group decisions in which everyone voices an opinion and decisions are made through a process of consensus and compromise.

A laissez-faire approach involves the leader relinquishing leadership power to the group entirely. Good laissez-faire leadership does not promote leaderlessness or chaos but, instead, is used effectively with mature groups that possess the leadership skills necessary to govern themselves as well as the skills needed to successfully complete the task at hand.

You can probably identify your own preferred leadership style somewhere along this continuum.

Figure 2. The Leadership Continuum
by simply imagining your response to the following scenario:

**Leadership Situation:** You’re headed out to go hiking with a group of friends. No one is the official leader, but because you organized the hike and chose the route, you feel responsible for the day’s success. When you get to the trailhead, you notice a “Trail Closed” sign. What is your response?

**Directive Response:** You might say something like, “Oops; sorry, gang. I guess I didn’t check trail condition reports. Let’s get back in the cars and drive up the road a few miles to another good trail I know.”

**Democratic Response:** You might say, “Hi—oh, what are we going to do?” and ask each of your friends what they want to do. You then make a decision yourself based on the majority opinion, after everyone weighs in.

**Consensual Response:** You might say, “Well, shoot, this isn’t going to work. Any other ideas?” and help your friends come up with a decision that everyone is content with.

**Laissez-faire Response:** You make the maps available to your friends, then excuse yourself to the outhouse, saying “I’ll be happy going wherever you all decide to go.”

Ideally, though, you would recognize the value of being able to demonstrate all these different leadership styles. Good leaders are aware that although their preferred leadership style may be effective in a variety of circumstances, different situations call for different responses. And the best leaders are able to move seamlessly between leadership styles according to the needs of the situation.

Shifting between leadership styles is difficult until you become confident in your own skills and authority. If you’re a new leader, you probably tend to prefer either a uniformly directive style (which showcases your skills, reinforces your authority, and generally leads to predictable outcomes) or a uniformly consensual style (which helps you feel not so alone in the leadership position because you are including everyone in the group). But as you gain more experience, you will find that you are a more effective leader if you start to adapt your leadership style to the needs of a particular situation.
Ultimately, your leadership style must be 
"you"—it must be authentic and reflect who you 
are, with all of your strengths and shortcomings. 
Trying to adopt someone else’s leadership 
style wholesale is generally ill-fated: you won’t 
“wear” the new style well, your participants or 
followers will see you as disingenuous, and you 
will have undermined your group’s confidence in 
both your integrity and your competence. As Bill 
George, former CEO of Medtronic and author of 
Authentic Leadership: Rediscovering the Secrets to 
Creating Lasting Value, writes, “Leadership is always 
about character. Leadership is always about 
authenticity.”

Influencing Others Outside the Leadership Environment

Your actions in your particular leadership 
environment—whether the classroom, the board-
room, the backcountry, or a philanthropic organi-
zation—are your expression of your leadership 
power and influence. As a leader, you might be 
tempted to think that you can be “off the clock” 
sometimes or that you don’t always need to 
measure up to the standards of integrity and 
character that others expect you to uphold. But 
the sometimes-tiring truth for truly great leaders is 
that your influence is always being expressed, 
even if you don’t intend it. And your actions 
outside your leadership environment can actually 
say more about your leadership potential and 
expertise than your actions inside your leadership 
environment.

After retiring from Outward Bound, I was 
CEO of an international executive recruiting 
firm. It was a large and diversified company 
with some fifty offices around the world, 
and we were hired to find potential senior 
management personnel for a wide variety 
of corporations. Our job was to evaluate the 
true leadership potential in these candidates. 

We found an interesting thing. We 
found that character was the most essential 
element for success in a corporate leadership 
role. Furthermore, we found that the best 
indicator of character was the amount of 
service—giving back to the community—the 
executive had blended into his or her career.

John Whitehead—former co-CEO of the 
investment banking house Goldman-Sachs, 
later Deputy Secretary of State, and most 
recently head of the project to rebuild Ground 
Zero underneath the former World Trade 
Center towers in New York—is a stunning 
example of a leader with both excellent 
corporate acumen and admirable character.

While John was co-CEO of Goldman-Sachs, 
certainly a fast-track and all-consuming business environment, he spent 
one-third of his time on not-for-profit work. 
His rationale was that when he served on 
boards of not-for-profit organizations, he got 
input about what was going on in the world 
that he could not get from his own internal 
executives at Goldman–Sachs. Being a part 
of the not-for-profit world and meeting with 
other board members who served on these 
minor not-for-profit organizations broadened 
his outlook and made him a far more effective 
co-CEO of Goldman-Sachs. John used his 
leadership influence not just to benefit 
the not-for-profit boards that he served on 
but also to serve as a role model for others 
in his company who, through his work, 
actions, and integrity, would see the value of 
volunteerism or community service in their 
own lives.

One of the values espoused by Outward 
Bound’s founder, Kurt Hahn, as you may remem-
ber from Chapter 1, Why Learn Leadership from 
Outward Bound? Is the value of service. Even more 
important than the benefit serving others provides 
to the individual or community served, service 
releases great reserves of inner strength in the one 
who serves. Outward Bound has wholeheartedly 
embraced the value of the relationship between
leadership and service and finds that its best leaders are ones who serve outside their work with Outward Bound. As a leader, you will find that such service work broadens your perspective, broadens your areas of expertise, broadens your world of contacts, and, most important, strengthens your self-image and makes you a more effective role model and leader. For more on service, see Chapter 13, Serving Others as a Community Leader in Part IV, Taking Leadership into Your Community.

**LEADING OTHER LEADERS**

One of the uniquely challenging situations you may encounter is the “opportunity” (remember Kurt Hahn’s words from Chapter 1: “your disability is your opportunity!”) to lead other leaders. You may encounter this situation if you are charged with training peers or if you are enlisted to take a group of leaders or managers on a retreat or wilderness trip.

As you know, leaders like to . . . well . . . lead. They like being in charge, making decisions, influencing others. And frequently they have a hard time following. Typically, the more leadership power an individual holds, the more difficulty that person has in pulling out of a leadership role, even temporarily.

Outward Bound frequently works with groups of leaders: corporate executives, leaders in education, and civic leaders. These people have always been in charge in their daily lives, and they are accustomed to showing a decisive attitude toward decision making. When faced with the unique and challenging situations presented on Outward Bound programs, these people usually have one of two responses.

The first type of response is that they may be so disoriented by the unfamiliar environment that they become somewhat vulnerable and realize a few key things. They learn that it is OK to show fear in unfamiliar territory. They learn that it is OK not to be in charge all the time. They learn to rely on the rest of their team and on the advice of the instructor, because they do not have the knowledge to be in charge all the time. They learn that it is OK to fail and to make decisions that may be wrong. And they learn that it is OK to show ignorance and to learn and listen to the group.

The other response is that they ignore any disorientation experienced in the unfamiliar environment and attempt to continue to assert themselves as leaders, as illustrated by the story below.

*Ed (not his real name) was the CEO of a large manufacturing company and a participant on an Outward Bound canoeing expedition. Ed was an experienced outdoorsman who had canoed quite a lot. He was partnered, however, with a novice canoeist. To meet his own level of skill, Ed tended to choose water routes that weren’t easy for beginners, and his canoe overturned several times, resulting in great frustration and resentment on the part of both paddlers.*

Eventually—thanks to some tactfully direct feedback from the instructor—Ed realized that he was giving advanced directions to someone who did not have the experience to either interpret or act upon them. Ed had initially been holding his partner at fault for all the capsizes, when in reality it was his fault for choosing routes that they as a pair were ill equipped to run successfully and for shouting directions that his partner couldn’t follow.

*Ed later said around the campfire that the most important thing he learned on this trip was that, whereas he was always the boss wherever he traveled in the world, on Outward Bound he was subject to compassionate and constructive criticism by staff and students alike. At Outward Bound, Ed learned to see a side of himself that he hadn’t experienced in his corporate world.*

*Ed later became a trustee of Outward Bound USA and for years has been a staunch supporter of Outward Bound’s*
ment that it is OK may be wrong, ignorance and ignore any dis-familiar eniron-assert themselves story below.

CEO of...and canoeing...ed outdoor...He was...he canoeist. Ed tended to...it's easy for...turned several...paddlers. An tactfully...actor—Ed...ganged...not have the...or act upon...hiding his...sizes, when in...using routes...tipped to run...directions...you...imphire that...around on this...always the...he world, on...ect to com...is by staff...if he hadn’t...world...of Outward...been a...nd Bound’s

objectives. This early experience on the canoe trip gave him some important feedback that perhaps made his leadership style more empathetic and compassionate.

What can you do when you’re faced with leading other leaders, perhaps ones like Ed? There are no magic answers for dealing with other leaders, and the key is to remember that you must get a good sense of each individual’s character and temperament before you do or say anything radical.

A couple of tips might help you figure out how best to approach your role as a leader of leaders. These tips are nearly as relevant for dealing with participants who have no other leadership experience, but they’re especially important when leading other leaders.

Acknowledge leader-participants’ leadership background and expertise. Although these participants might be entering unfamiliar territory, they are still bringing many leadership skills and attitudes with them. Acknowledge the expertise that exists in the group, and reassure participants that while they will not be expected to lead in situations that are out of their areas of proficiency, their leadership skills will be called upon and valued throughout the expedition, training, or retreat.

Clarify your role and their roles. Explain that you will be the official leader for the duration of the training or expedition and that this is a great opportunity for the participants not to be in charge. Don’t completely remove the participants from all leadership responsibilities, however. Make them wholly responsible for some things right from the beginning, such as time management.

Provide ample information. One of the things that can make people—and leaders in particular—feel most vulnerable and most patronized is when they feel as though they do not have enough information about situations. Withholding information sets up a power dynamic in which you, the leader, hold the information and thus the power, leaving the participants in the dark and powerless. You don’t need to give the participants a minute-by-minute account of the plan for each day, but provide them with a general framework that outlines the goals of the expedition or training, an itinerary, and any other information that they might likely need or want.

Do not engage in power struggles. Cultivate a respectful and positive rapport with each individual, and avoid situations that could result in public power struggles. If you sense someone questioning your authority or attempting to seize power simply because he or she is used to being in control, approach that person directly and confront the situation in a nonthreatening manner. See Chapter 3, Communicating Effectively, for more information on power struggles.

Demonstrate a transparent leadership style. When appropriate and instructive, explain your leadership decisions to the participants. For example, you might say, “We were going to spend this afternoon learning how to use a map and compass to triangulate, but the discussion about corporate ethics and values seemed so engaging to everyone that I decided to let it keep going. We’ll do the compass work tomorrow instead.”

Involve others in decision making when appropriate. Although leader-participants might not share your knowledge and skill in a particular leadership environment, they are probably quite experienced decision makers. And making decisions in a new environment with a group of other leaders can be a good learning opportunity for them. You might say, “Folks, we need to decide whether we’re going to take the more direct, off-trail route to the peak we’re going to climb tomorrow or whether we’re going to stay on the trail, which is the longer but more straightforward route.” Then give the participants the maps, make yourself available for questioning, and let the participants make the final decision.

Share your vulnerabilities, and offer opportunities for participants to do so too. Opening up about your own leadership concerns can provide a great forum for others to share similar anxieties. When leaders begin to see themselves
and other leaders as ordinary, vulnerable humans, it gives them a chance to acknowledge a side of themselves that they probably usually ignore. (See Chapter 4, Building Trust, Building a Team.)

A FINAL NOTE
The saying goes that great minds think alike, but in fact, great minds don't think alike—that's part of what makes them great. Although many of the most commonly used effective leadership strategies and methods have resulted in history's greatest leaders, one of the key pieces to any effective leader's style and presence—the overall leadership package that he or she presents—is his or her unique approach. One of the things that will make you the strongest leader you can be is your ability to think independently and be yourself. By all means, borrow ideas, model habits, and adopt strategies from leaders you admire. But at the end of the day, the leadership package you present should be one that originates from you.