

 Episode 90

## DEMONSTRATING LEADERSHIP: Leadership & your Personal Brand

<https://talkabouttalk.com/90-demonstrating-leadership-personal-brand>



image: Canva

Have you been told it's time to start “demonstrating leadership”? Learn 5 ways to communicate your leadership potential and make leadership an integral part of your personal brand. You can create thought leadership, demonstrate people leadership, you can talk leadership, and more.

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# SUMMARY: DEMONSTRATING LEADERSHIP

## **5 WAYS TO COMMUNICATE LEADERSHIP**

### **1. Be a PROACTIVE, STRATEGIC Leader**

- This is really about **two things**: being proactive and being strategic.
- Be **Proactive**
  - What's the opposite of "lead"? Follow. Leaders lead. They're out front. They're proactive.
  - Use your initiative. Set the plan. Create the vision.
- Be **Strategic**
  - Talk strategy. Identify trends. Solve problems. Be decisive. Set the strategy!

### **2. Demonstrate PEOPLE LEADERSHIP**

- Being a people leader is about **deploying talent** in your organization. It's about allocating, delegating, trusting and supporting.
- **Coach and mentor people**, both formally and informally.
- Great leaders are **role models**. They inspire and set a good example.

**"The great leaders I know all seem to get a lot of satisfaction out of their people's success. They **elevate** them."**

- Dr. Andrea Wojnicki  
Communication Coach



### **3. Create THOUGHT-LEADERSHIP**

- Step 1: Your thought leadership **topic**
  - Your thought leadership topic should be part of your personal brand. And just like your personal brand, your thought leadership topic will evolve over time.

- Find a subject area that fascinates you and double-down. Go deep and learn everything you can.
- It could be a sub-discipline, an industry focus, a specific element of your product or service, a step in the product pipeline, something technical, an emerging trend,...
- Step 2: **Sharing** thought leadership
  - Share your expertise both in the moment (e.g. informally, in conversations) and formally (in white papers, in webinars and training sessions, on social media).
  - Publish a paper on LinkedIn!

## 4. Communicate with CONFIDENCE

- Leaders exude confidence. Confidence is a **skill that can be learned!**
  - [Learn the 4P's of Mental Preparation](#)
  - [The A.B.C.D.E.'s of Confidence in the Moment](#)
  - [Let's Talk Imposter Syndrome](#)
- **Focus on your personal brand.** Remind yourself of your superpower, your expertise, that thing that comes naturally, and lean into it.
- **Cultivate a growth mindset.** *"I know what I know, and I'm keen to learn more."* Make this your default mindset, but also what you think about when you feel nervous.
- **Choose a confidence hack** that works for you and use it whenever you feel that shot of adrenaline. It could be deep breathing, expansive body language, a mantra, or emulating someone else's confidence.

## 5. Talk LEADERSHIP

- Use the **word, "LEAD."** As in thought-leader, global lead, team lead, project lead, division leader, or meeting leader.
- **Present tense** – when you introduce yourself. "I lead the X team..."
- **Past tense** - Talk about what you led in the last, on your CV, on your LinkedIn profile, etc. Count how many times the word "lead" or "led" shows up!
  - Explain your career trajectory in terms of a "PATH TO LEADERSHIP." "I chose that role on my *path to leadership* because it gave me this valuable experience..."

"When I talk to managers, I get the feeling that they are important. When I talk to **leaders**, I get the feeling that I am important."

- Alexander den Heijers  
Inspirational Speaker



## RESOURCES

### Podcast Episodes

- #52 - [Communication Skills of Effective Leaders](#) - with executive coach Heather Stark
- #58 - [The 4P's of Mentally Preparing to Communicate with Confidence](#)
- #59 - [The A.B.C.D.E.'s of Confidence in the Moment](#)
- #83 - [Let's Talk Imposter Syndrome](#)
- #75 - [Leadership: Communicate Like a Boss!](#) - with Jill Nykoliation, CEO Juniper Park\TBWA

### Dr. Andrea Wojnicki & Talk About Talk

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## TRANSCRIPT

Here's a question I get all the time:

*How can I demonstrate leadership? My boss says I'm conscientious and technically I know my stuff. I'm a good team player and now it's time to step it up and demonstrate my leadership skills. How can I do this? Andrea, can you HELP ME?*

Yes, of course! We got this!

*Oh thank goodness!*

Greetings and welcome to Talk About Talk episode #90, focused on DEMONSTRATING LEADERSHIP. I'm your communication coach, Dr. Andrea Wojnicki (please call me Andrea!).

Are you an ambitious executive with a growth mindset, looking to advance your career? Are you ready to demonstrate your leadership and get promoted? Whether you're in the c-suite looking for that CEO title, or maybe you want to make partner. Or perhaps you're looking for that promotion from manager to director? Well, you're in the right place.

At Talk About Talk, we focus on communication-skills-topics like personal branding, confidence, and networking. This is the critically important stuff they don't teach you in school. It's what takes you from a B+ to an A+ in whatever it is you do. And if you check out the TalkAboutTalk.com website, you'll find online corporate training, 1-on-1 coaching with me, the archive of this bi-weekly podcast, and the free weekly communication-skills newsletter. I really hope you'll go to the website and sign up for the free weekly communication skills training newsletter. But you can choose what works for you!

Welcome to Talk About Talk episode number 90 – DEMONSTRATING LEADERSHIP. In this episode we're focusing on how to communicate your leadership potential. In other words, how to incorporate leadership into your personal brand. I'm going to give you lotsa ideas about how you can start demonstrating leadership RIGHT NOW, and accelerate that promotion.

In this episode you'll learn 5 general ways that you can demonstrate your leadership. Of course, everyone's specific context is unique. Your relative seniority, your discipline, your industry. And of course your personality. My challenge for you is to consider these 5 suggestions, and then choose 1-2 of them and go hard.

Let's get into this! I suggest that you just listen for now, just absorb. As always, you don't need to take notes, because I do that for you. I summarize everything for you at the end of the episode. And you can always access the printable episode shownotes on the talkabouttalk.com website. So, while you're listening, you can just keep doing whatever you're doing – driving or walking or housework, or sitting on the couch. Whatever. You don't have to take notes because I do that for you.

Are you ready? OK. The 5 ways for you to demonstrate leadership are:

- 1. Be a PROACTIVE, Strategic Leader**
- 2. Demonstrate PEOPLE LEADERSHIP**
- 3. Create THOUGHT-LEADERSHIP**
- 4. Communicate with CONFIDENCE**
- 5. Talk LEADERSHIP**

Let's just let that sink in for a minute. Ask yourself, which of these do I do already? Which ones come naturally? And perhaps more importantly. Which of these things could I do better? That's where you can get lotsa leverage and start to get noticed as a leader. Again, it's....

Let me now go into a bit of detail and give you some specific suggestions for each of these ways to demonstrate or communicate leadership:

## 1. Be a PROACTIVE, Strategic Leader

This point is really about two things. It's about Strategic focus, and it's about being proactive.

STRATEGIC FOCUS – as in setting the plan, or the vision. It's about explicitly reminding people in meetings about the strategy. You know, like when you hear someone say, “Well, based on our strategic priorities, my suggestion is ...”

This is about referencing the firm's priorities, and ideally identify opportunities for new ones.

And that's the second part of this point – being PROACTIVE. Think about what leadership is. Think about what it is NOT. The opposite of leading is following. SO let's take our queue from that. Leaders are decision makers. They are problem solvers. They proactively and decisively identify trends.

You might be thinking, “OK, but HOW do I do this? How can I be a PROACTIVE strategic leader? Well, let's start with baby steps. You could be the one who speaks up when things aren't aligning with the firms' strategic vision. On the other hand, you could also raise your hand when things are getting stale, when new ideas are needed. Why can't YOU be the one who identifies the opportunity and makes it happen?

What else? You could proactively create an initiative to solve a challenge or to proactively leverage a new opportunity. That reminds me, a great source for identifying these initiatives is a simple SWOT. Ask yourself, what are the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and/or threats we face, and what can we do about it?

- It could be an internal training exercise
- It could be a competitive assessment.

If you're a director looking for that elusive partner title, you might look around and figure out what your firm needs. Does someone need to help train the new recruits? The summer interns? What about a task force focused on D&I? Or maybe you take it upon yourself to lead the firm's cyber security initiative? Or maybe you set up a new dashboard for the firm to focus on key metrics.

Do you see? The possibilities are endless.

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Again, it's about being STRATEGIC and it's about being PROACTIVE. I'm sure you can find something to demonstrate your focus as a PROACTIVE, STRATEGIC leader.

So that's the first way for you to demonstrate leadership: Be a PROACTIVE, STRATEGIC leader. The 2<sup>nd</sup> way for you to communicate your leadership potential is

## **2.Demonstrate PEOPLE LEADERSHIP**

This is about deploying talent in your organization. It's about delegating, allocating. It's also about coaching and mentoring people. Great leaders do this all the time, both formally and informally.

Leaders create environments where their people can flourish. They facilitate their people's independence. They trust and delegate. But they also support their people. With the infrastructure they need to succeed.

Formally, great leaders create systems to enable their people's success. Weekly status meetings. An environment of psychological safety, where they encourage people to voice their concerns. They also publicly celebrate others individual and team achievements. Acknowledging effort and outcome.

The great leaders I know all seem to get a lot of satisfaction out of their people's success. They elevate them. Informally, they spend a lot of time coaching and mentoring.

Regardless of your seniority in your firm, there's always an opportunity to inspire, be a role model, set a good example, to lead. It could be leading a major project, a minor initiative, or even just leading a meeting. I encourage you to think about where your passion and expertise lies, and to share your expertise with others, coach and train them – again, informally, formally, or perhaps both.

So that's the first way for you to communicate leadership: Demonstrate PEOPLE LEADERSHIP. Now we've covered "Being a PROACTIVE STRATEGIC leader, and "Demonstrating PEOPLE Leadership." The 3<sup>rd</sup> way for you to communicate your leadership potential is to

## **3.Create THOUGHT-LEADERSHIP**

Thought leadership is kind of a buzzword lately, isn't it? Well, I urge you to consider how you can develop thought leadership and leverage it in your career.

There are really 2 parts of this suggestion. One is to figure out what to focus on, and the 2<sup>nd</sup> is to figure out how to share it.

This reminds me of my coaching on Personal Branding. I ALWAYS start with articulating or defining the PB, then we move on to communicating it. This thought leadership idea is very similar, And in fact, ideally your focus with thought leadership should be integrated with your PB. If it's not, I'm guessing either your personal brand or your thought leadership focus needs to shift.

So where to start? How about this. Consider what parts of your job fascinate you. It could be a sub-discipline, an industry focus, a specific element of your product or service pipeline, something technical, a new technology, or maybe it's something that seems tangential to your job but where there's an opportunity to leverage some expertise. Like climate change, or e-commerce, or mindfulness and meditation. What topics do you gravitate to?

Figure it out and double down. Learn everything you can.

Looking back on my career, I realize I did this when I was at Kraft Foods working as a brand manager. I was genuinely curious about this WOM phenomenon.... I wondered, how can we encourage our consumers to recommend this product to their friends? I remember my boss, Anne, encouraged my interest in word-of-mouth. I guess that's all it took. I kind of went crazy... I wrote my doctoral dissertation on the phenomenon! But I digress.

Once you have your focus area, you can share your expertise both informally and formally. Informally, in the moment (in conversations when a related topic comes up, etc.). And formally, you can share your expertise formally in white papers, in webinars and training sessions, and so on. LinkedIn makes it super-easy to share thought-leadership. Write a short paper, import it to LinkedIn, and BAM. You're published.

Over time, your focus-area or topic for thought leadership will evolve. So don't feel overwhelmed when you're deciding where to focus. It can and will shift. I went from strategic brand management to word-of-mouth to interpersonal communication. Your thought-leadership focus will similarly evolve.

Overtime, you will also shift from proactively focusing on generating thought leadership (again, informally bringing it up in meetings, and proactively publishing thought-leadership) to you becoming the go-to resource for expertise in that area. That's when you know you've incorporated thought leadership as part of your PB.

So that's the 3rd way for you to demonstrate leadership: Create THOUGHT LEADERSHIP. Do you remember the 1<sup>st</sup> 2? We've covered (1) "Being a PROACTIVE STRATEGIC leader, (2) "Demonstrating PEOPLE Leadership" and now (3) "Demonstrating THOUGHT LEADERSHIP.

The 4th way for you to communicate your leadership potential is to:

## 4. Communicate with CONFIDENCE

When we think about great leaders, we often think about confident people. People who don't seem nervous, who seem to know what to say and do in any given situation, be it on-the-fly or a formal presentation or speech.

I have to tell you that I have so much to say about confidence... If you check out the talkabouttalk.com website and click the SEARCH button on the top corner, you can search confidence and lots will come up – both podcast episodes as well as newsletters that you can skim. I particularly recommend podcast episode 58 “communicating with confidence” and episode # 83, focused on imposter syndrome.

Let me just share a few insights about confidence that I hope will help:

- 1) Focus on your **personal brand**. Before you enter that big meeting, or whatever the context, if you need a confidence boost, remind yourself about your personal brand. Remind yourself of your superpower. What's your expertise? Then lean into that. Of course, we all have lots to learn. But if you remind yourself of your superpower, that thing you love that comes naturally, that sets you apart, you'll certainly feel more confident.
- 2) The second confidence insight I want to share is a **growth mindset**. Make this your default mindset, but especially when you feel that shot of adrenaline. What is a growth mindset? It's thinking “I know what I know, and I'm keen to learn more.” Personally I consciously focus on a growth mindset when I'm moderating an open Q&A session after a corporate workshop. I never know what Q will get asked. SO I focus on a growth mindset “I know what I know and I'm keen to learn more.” It works beautifully and I highly recommend it. You know when someone asks someone a Q and they say “oh I need to think about that. Off the top of my head I'd say>>> but I need to do something and research. I promise I'll get back to you.” Wow. That's a growth mindset! And the other thing about having a growth mindset is that it helps us stay right where we need to be in terms of the continuum from nervousness to confidence to arrogance. A growth mindset will not only elevate us out of nervousness, but it will also prevent us from being arrogant. Arrogant people are not growth-oriented. They are defensive and closed. SO that's the second confidence insight. Focus on a growth mindset.
- 3) The 3<sup>rd</sup> confidence insight that I suggest is choosing a **confidence hack** that works for you and using it whenever you feel that shot of adrenaline. Again, you can learn all about these hacks in Talk About Talk podcast episode 58 or 83 (I'll leave links so you can easily access them in the shownotes). Some hacks that seem to work for people include deep breathing, using your body language to be expansive, adopting a mantra, or emulating someone else's confidence.

Wow. We're almost done here. We've covered 4/of the 5 ways to demonstrate your leadership. There's (1) "Being a PROACTIVE STRATEGIC leader, (2) "Demonstrating PEOPLE Leadership" (3) "Demonstrating THOUGHT LEADERSHIP and (4) Communicating with CONFIDENCE.

The 5<sup>th</sup> and last way to demonstrate leadership? It's simple.

## 5. Talk LEADERSHIP

As in use the word, "LEAD." It sounds easy, right? But I have clients who hesitate to use the word LEAD when referencing themselves.

I'm not talking about inflating your job description. I'm talking about highlighting whatever it is that you lead. When you introduce yourself, you could say "I lead the X brand," or "I lead the X team."

Self-introductions are an excellent place to start. But I encourage you to also check your written bio, your CV, on your LinkedIn profile, and so on. DO you mention that word "lead"? How many times?

And yes, there's all sorts of leadership.

Thought-leader, Global lead, team lead, project lead, division leader, even meeting leader.

And think both present and past tense:

- Present tense – when you introduce yourself. "I lead the X team..."
- Past tense - you could say something like "When I led the meeting on..."
- In terms of past tense, you can also consciously focus on communicating your "PATH TO LEADERSHIP." It's not just your career trajectory. When you talk about your past, explain it in terms of your path to leadership. "I chose that role on my path to leadership because it gave me this valuable experience..."

So that's the 5<sup>th</sup> and last way for you to communicate leadership: Talk LEADERSHIP! Use the word lead in reference to yourself.

OK - As promised, I'm now going to summarize the key learnings. Unless your brain is a supercomputer, I'm guessing you don't have the 5 suggestions for how to communicate your leadership memorized. That's why I'm going to summarize them right now, and it's also why I provide a printable summary on the talkabouttalk.com website.

Here goes. The 5 ways for you to demonstrate leadership are:

1. Be a **PROACTIVE**, Strategic Leader
2. Demonstrate **PEOPLE LEADERSHIP**
3. Create **THOUGHT-LEADERSHIP**
4. Communicate with **CONFIDENCE**
5. Talk **LEADERSHIP**

Your homework? Choose the 1-2 of these suggestions to focus on, where you think you can make a big dent on communicating your leadership potential.

### 1. Be a **PROACTIVE**, Strategic Leader

Remember this is about two things: Strategic focus, and being proactive. Using your initiative.

### 2. Demonstrate **PEOPLE LEADERSHIP**

This is about deploying talent in your organization and it's also about coaching and mentoring people both formally and informally. Be a people leader.

### 3. Create **THOUGHT-LEADERSHIP**

Again, there are 2 parts of this suggestion. One is to figure out what to focus on, and the 2<sup>nd</sup> is to figure out how to share it.

Find a subject area, a topic that fascinates you and double down. Go deep. Then share your expertise on-the-fly in meetings, but also formally on social media, white papers, and in training sessions.

### 4. Communicate with **CONFIDENCE**

As I said, I have so much to say about how to develop confidence. PLEASE see the shownotes! 3 places to start:

- Focus on your personal brand. Remind yourself of your superpower, your expertise, and lean into it.
- Cultivate a growth mindset. A growth mindset is thinking, “I know what I know, and I’m keen to learn more.” Make this your default mindset.
- Choosing a confidence hack that works for you and using it whenever you feel that shot of adrenaline. It could be deep breathing, expansive body language, a mantra, or emulating someone else’s confidence.

The 5<sup>th</sup> and last way to demonstrate leadership? It’s simple.

### 5. Talk **LEADERSHIP**

As in use the word, “LEAD.” As in thought-leader, Global lead, team lead, project lead, division leader, or meeting leader. And make it both present and past tense:

- Present tense – when you introduce yourself. “I lead the X team...”

# Talk About Talk™ Shownotes

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- Past tense - including what you led in the last, but also in articulating your “PATH TO LEADERSHIP.”

Phew. OK – that’s 5 ways to demonstrate your leadership and that’s it for episode 90! Please check out the summary in the shownotes on the talkabouttalk.com website. Just click on the PODCAST tab and you’ll find it there.

And while you’re there, I really hope you’ll sign up for the Talk About Talk newsletter! This is your chance to get free communication skills coaching from me every week in a simple to digest weekly email. Just go to [talk abouttalk.com](http://talkabouttalk.com) to sign up or email me directly and I’ll add you to the list. You can email me anytime at [Andrea@TalkAboutTalk.com](mailto:Andrea@TalkAboutTalk.com). Please email me and let me know which suggestion helped you demonstrate leadership. I love hearing from you!

**THANKS for LISTENING. Talk soon!**

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