



STRATEGIC ACCELERATION MEDIA

Strategic Presence: The Power that Fuels Leadership!

By Tony Jeary

The goal of leadership is to produce superior results on purpose and that makes leadership a results contest. The challenge of leadership is to persuade and motivate those they lead to produce the results they want. When people voluntarily and enthusiastically do what their leaders ask them to do and the desired results are achieved, leaders are considered to be effective and successful! The question is how do leaders really get others to voluntarily and enthusiastically produce the desired results? There are many parts to this puzzle, but there is none greater than a condition I describe as Strategic Presence.

Here is a great story that illustrates Strategic Presence and also illuminates its effect. A student from a foreign country was enrolled in the middle of a school year. During the first day of class, the other kids in the class were doing what kids do. There was a lot of giggling and staring and posturing for the new arrival. The new student was dressed in a way that did not meet the expectations of a few of the other children and eventually one of them (the class clown) began to make jokes about the new student's appearance.

As the scene was progressing toward chaos, the teacher was about to intervene when a girl stood up and told everyone to stop picking on their new classmate. The girl reminded them that it was scary to be new in a school and they needed to be kind to the student and make them feel welcome. She reminded them they should treat this new person as they would want to be treated if they were in a new country and a new school. After class, the teacher called the girl aside and said, "That was a very brave thing you did. Why did you do that?" The girl replied, "Because that is what my Mom and Dad would expect me to do!"

This story powerfully illustrates the essence and the effect of what I call Strategic Presence. The girl had merely done what she knew her parents would want her to do. Her parents had succeeded in creating a positive presence in her mind, which gave her the willingness and courage to do what she did. Most importantly, the presence of her parents was so authentic that they did not have to be physically present to inspire their daughter's good behavior.

Leaders create impressions that exist in the mind of every person they lead. It is a presence that defines the perceptions people have of their leaders and what they believe about them. It is this overall persona that I am referring to when I use the term Strategic Presence and there are two types: Positive and Negative. Leaders are constantly creating and presenting images of influence that produce both.

The most important fact about Strategic Presence is that it produces two possible reactions in others. It either produces voluntary cooperation or it produces various forms of resistance. If

leaders generate positive Strategic Presence, people will be more likely to support what they want, most of the time. However, if perceptions of leadership are negative people will substitute resistance for cooperation. The possibilities of how people will respond to Strategic Presence are limited to cooperation or resistance. There is not much middle ground between them. As someone once said, “you are either for us against us!” It is easy to see why creating an authentic, positive strategic presence is critical for the execution of a vision.

Creating positive Strategic Presence is not a strategy of manipulation. The positive strategic presence leaders project must be authentic. Failing the test of authenticity means the very image leadership hopes to establish will be perceived as deceptive and disingenuous, or worse. People are very perceptive and they will see through efforts to project a phony persona for the purposes of manipulating their behavior. So, why shouldn't a leader's strategic presence just be allowed to be what it is?" That is a great question and the answer is simple. Many leaders are misunderstood and create perceptions that really don't match their intent. So, understanding how Strategic Presence is created will minimize the possibility of being misunderstood.

So, how is strategic presence is created? What are the things about leadership that speaks the loudest about it? What creates the perceptions that combine to produce Strategic Presence? There are two components that contribute to strategic presence: values and behavior.

Our values are established by what we believe to be right, wrong, true, false, acceptable, unacceptable, appropriate and inappropriate. Let's face it, we have all developed deep, strong opinions about many things as we live our lives. Our opinions spring forth from your values and your values influence what we actually do.

Our values and beliefs impact 5 categories of that drive our behavior, and it is our behavior that creates Strategic Presence. The five categories that drive behavior are:

1. Work ethic
2. Integrity
3. Judgment
4. Courage
5. Willingness to help others

So, if you want to be a great leader, you need to have great values and your values must be demonstrated in the action you take. This is the essence of Strategic Presence and it is truly the power that fuels leadership.