



# Book Charisma

## Seven Keys to Developing the Magnetism that Leads to Success

Tony Alessandra  
Warner Books, 2000

---

## Recommendation

Tony Alessandra focuses on how to build your charisma by analyzing the seven elements that comprise it: your silent message, speaking ability, listening skills, persuasive talent, use of time and space, adaptability, and vision. He provides a short quiz you can complete at the beginning of each chapter to identify easily which areas of your charisma need work. Alessandra believes that you don't have to be born with charisma, that anyone can increase his or her level of charisma. He demystifies it in this clearly focused, very readable book. Alessandra probably could write complete books on each of charisma's seven keys. In fact, the section on adaptability is essentially a summary of a book he co-authored, *The Platinum Rule*. But instead of seven volumes, here is one well-edited book packed full of content. *BooksInShort* recommends this book to people who want to improve their charisma, or to understand the tangible aspects of this intangible quality.

## Take-Aways

- Everyone can build the skills that improve charisma.
- The way you carry yourself in public sends a silent message that affects your charisma.
- You can learn to speak with authority by preparing yourself before giving a speech.
- Develop your listening skills to increase your charisma.
- To become an active listener, focus on understanding the speaker's point of view and refrain from judging the message.
- The ability to persuade others is a major element of your charisma.
- Use space to your advantage when communicating with others.
- In casual situations, corner-to-corner seating is best, but in formal situations, it is better to be behind a desk or across the table.
- The way you choose to use your time sends a message about how valuable your time is to you.
- If you can learn to adapt to others' personality styles, you will be able to build rapport with anyone.

# Summary

## What is Charisma?

If people like you even though they don't know much about you, you have charisma. It's the quality that creates leaders. Assess your personal amount of charisma by examining its seven elements: your silent message, ability to speak well, listening skills, persuasive talent, use of time and space, ability to adapt, and vision. Fortunately, charisma can be learned. Very few people are strong in all seven categories, but almost everyone can build on existing strengths.

## Develop Your Silent Message

Your silent message is all about the way you carry yourself. The silent message you send to others can be broken down into five categories:

### Emotional

Your emotional self: Enthusiasm, self-control, and a positive attitude are the most important components of your emotional energy. Others discern your enthusiasm from your voice, gestures, and facial expressions. If you have positive energy, it spreads to the people around you. Don't fake being happy, just realize that - particularly when you first meet someone - people watch every word, gesture, and facial expression. The positive attitude you display can help or hinder you in creating an honest and open line of communication.

### Psychological

Your psychological self is how you think about your desires and goals. Do you believe your goals are achievable? To strengthen this aspect of your personality, build up your self-esteem. Then you will be better able to handle rejection and move on to other opportunities.

### Intellectual

Your intellectual self is determined by how well you have developed your mind. Most people are given basic intelligence. Are you using yours to its capacity or letting it get flabby from disuse? You can strengthen your mind by taking classes in a subject you have never studied but always wondered about. You could try learning a musical instrument. Exercising your mind will increase your ability to make bonds with others, which will increase your charisma.

### Spiritual

Your spiritual self refers to the bonds of trust you create, the level of caring you display, and the attitude of service you impart. If your spiritual self is strong, you communicate a sense of higher purpose. Having a strong spiritual self is the opposite of being self-centered.

### Physical

Your physical self is the final element of your silent message. It is the way you present yourself outwardly. A nice wardrobe, a pleasant smile, a firm handshake, and a good sense of grooming are physical qualities that can increase your charisma. A good physical image can help you present your skills and virtues in the best possible light. If you look healthy, you have an aura of energy that will have a positive effect on those around you.

## Learn To Speak With Authority

Being able to communicate well can make a critical difference in your career. You will have to learn to overcome stage fright. Know your material backwards and forwards so you feel like an expert when you arrive.

“Charisma is the ability to influence others positively by connecting with them physically, emotionally, and intellectually.”

Follow these six steps for effective speech preparation:

1. Identify your purpose: Make sure you understand the reason you are giving the speech. Determine what you want your audience to know when you are finished.
2. Know your audience: Who are you talking to? Why have you been invited to speak? Will you be facing a hostile audience?
3. Know your material: If you are at ease with your material, your audience will be at ease listening to you.
4. Focus on your big idea: Your presentation should be structured so that everything supports your "one big idea." Don't use any more than seven ideas to support your big idea.
5. Get your audience's attention and keep it: Open your speech with an interesting story or example that can lead into your focus. Change the pace of your speech every 10 to 15 minutes to maintain your audience's attention.
6. Practice and visualize: Practice, but don't memorize your speech. When you memorize, you concentrate more on the words than the presentation, and you can end up sounding stale. After practicing, visualize yourself delivering a successful speech. Go through your entire presentation in your mind and see yourself being successful. Repeat these visualizations as often as possible before you give your speech.

## Improve Your Listening Skills

Being a good listener means more than just shutting your mouth while someone speaks, though that is a good start.

“Leadership is practically impossible for the person who can't listen effectively.”

People listen to others at one of four basic levels of attentiveness:

1. The non-listener makes no effort to hear what the speaker is saying. Non-listeners regularly interrupt conversations and always try to get the last word. Non-listeners are generally considered social bores or know-it-alls.
2. The marginal listener hears the words and sounds, but misses the meaning and intent. The marginal listener is at more risk of misunderstanding than the non-listener, who will noticeably demonstrate a lack of attention. Marginal listeners give the speaker the impression that they understood the message, regardless of whether they really did.
3. The technical listener makes a conscious effort to hear what the speaker is saying, but still doesn't try to understand the speaker's intent.
4. The active listener does not judge the speaker's message, but focuses on understanding the speaker's point of view.

“Being charismatic is a marvelous advantage in any endeavor. But unless it's backed up by knowledge, character, skill, experience, and nobility of purpose, it will eventually be seen as the facade it is.”

To become an active listener, work on these skills:

- Concentrating: Focus all of your attention solely on the speaker.
- Acknowledging: Show your interest with eye contact, and by smiling, or nodding.
- Researching: Ask questions and offer comments. Learn the speaker's interests.
- Exercising control over your emotions: Count to ten and respond slowly.
- Sensing nonverbal messages: Watch the speaker's body language and gestures.
- Structuring: Organize the information you hear.

## Increase Your Power of Persuasion

Persuasiveness is a major element of charisma. To improve your ability to persuade others, understand the need gap - the difference between the current situation and the desired situation. Use the following steps to determine "need gaps" and then to close them.

“The real charismatic leader has multiple skills and behaviors that are, to some extent, dependent on one another.”

You also can use this four-step model as a tool for persuasion:

1. Discover needs and goals. Begin with open questions that encourage the other person to give more information than a simple

- yes or no. Once you understand the other person's needs, ask closed questions that will help you bring that person to his or her goals.
2. Create and select a solution. Include the other person in the process of creating the solution, and they will be much more committed to implementing it. Don't create solutions unilaterally and then inflict them upon another person.
  3. Commit to an action plan. Make sure the other person clearly understands the benefits of implementing the solution. You must have a mutual agreement on your action plan, or nothing will happen.
  4. Identify, monitor, and measure results. Make sure you identify criteria that can be used to establish whether or not your solution is a success. This should be something concrete such as a return on an investment.

## **Make Better Use of Your Time and Space**

You can increase your charisma by using space to your advantage while communicating with others. When you are meeting casually with someone familiar, sit at right angles from them. This permits gestures and eye contact. In formal or competitive situations, sit behind a desk or across a table. This provides a safety barrier which allows you to monitor nonverbal clues and gestures.

“In our Information Age, almost everything is in flux; charisma is now all the more in demand.”

Cultural differences exist in the amount of personal space someone requires to feel comfortable. People from "contact" cultures (such as Arabs, Latin Americans, and Italians) view people from "non-contact" cultures (North Americans and Northern Europeans) as cold and impolite. Non-contact people tend to see contact people as aggressive or rude. Either way, someone who is distracted by your behavior doesn't hear your message. Try to be aware of the other person's need for personal space.

“You're never too good or too experienced to ignore some of the fundamentals of good speaking.”

The way you use your time affects your charisma. When you constantly show up late for meetings, you send the message that you don't think the other person's time is as valuable as yours. On the other hand, if you show up an hour early, you imply that your time is not valuable to you.

## **Learn to Adapt**

Learning to understand and adapt to other people's personality styles is another essential element of your charisma. Each of us has a personality style that reflects the way we prefer to deal with others. If you can identify someone's personality style and adapt to it, you can improve communication and build rapport. Once you have identified someone's personality style, adapt your communication to it. This will increase your charisma.

“It's more crucial than ever to hone the skills that heighten our power of persuasion and, in turn, our charisma.”

Personality styles are divided into four main categories:

1. Directors are dominant, take-charge people. They are driven by an inner need to get results. They make good managers and administrators because they work quickly and impressively by themselves. They are task-oriented.
2. Socializers are fast-paced and fun loving. They thrive on admiration, acknowledgement, and applause. However, they can be impatient and often have a short attention span. They are more people-oriented than directors, but less so than relaters. A socializer will appreciate any humorous anecdotes you share and will want to become your friend before you make any decisions.
3. Relaters are the most people-oriented of these four types. They are good listeners and extremely supportive. You need to build trust with a relater and concentrate on security, harmony, and concrete benefits.
4. Thinkers are result-oriented, problem solvers. They are more introverted than directors. They do not like huggers, touchers, or people who are loud. A thinker wants detailed data before making any decision.

## **Expand Your Sense of Vision**

Vision is the capstone of the seven keys to charisma. Being an expert at the other six keys is great, but without vision you'll feel like you are all dressed up with no place to go. See charisma as a locomotive and then imagine vision as the engine. The other six keys

are the wheels that keep the train on the track.

“You can enhance your charisma by staying flexible and being aware of the time and spatial needs of others.”

"A defining moment" is the first stage in arriving at your vision. This is the moment you realize that your idea is exciting. A visionary idea appeals to the values and needs of the people you seek to lead. The second stage is your "mission," which gives purpose, context, and stamina to your defining moment. An effective mission must come from your heart.

“A person who truly practices adaptability is more tactful, reasonable, understanding, and nonjudgmental.”

The more passion you have for your mission, the more people it will attract. The third step in reaching your vision is setting and accomplishing goals. Write them down to give them additional meaning. Then, take the time to develop your vision and, thus, your charisma.

## About the Author

**Tony Alessandra**, Ph.D. co-authored *The Platinum Rule*, *Non-Manipulative Selling*, and *The Art of Managing People*. He is a respected leadership motivator.

---

---