

ROLE CALL

Calling Forth Your Leadership Brilliance

By Vernice Jones and Caroline Beckett

If you were really tuned into your full potential as a leader, what might be different? What would you strive for? What could you accomplish? We each have a brilliant leader inside of us with many faces. We call these 'faces' leadership identities.



“WE CAN CHOOSE TO EXTEND OUR LEADERSHIP SKILLS BY GRANTING OURSELVES ACCESS TO A GREATER RANGE OF LEADERSHIP IDENTITIES.”

WHAT IS A LEADERSHIP IDENTITY?

These are not masks that we put on and take off, but identities that are integral to who we are and how we connect with others to get things done. Human nature leads us to rely on the identities that we are most comfortable with and to allow the others to diminish. Some of us keep our most compelling leadership identities hidden from work, only to keep them alive and well at home, with friends and family, or in our community. We can choose to extend our leadership skills by granting ourselves access to a greater range of leadership identities, increasing our leadership capacity, enhancing collaboration, generating innovation and creating more fulfillment at work. We all have multiple identities that are not just objective personal and professional roles we fulfill (wife, husband, friend, corporate vice president, entrepreneur, etc.). These may involve playing out very personal emotionally-infused identities that define how we view ourselves, how we show up in the world and how others see us.

Here are a few examples of identities you may have taken on consciously or subconsciously. I am:

1. The hero/heroine
2. The quiet contemplative soul
3. The thinker
4. The calm spirit in the face of chaos
5. The adventurer
6. A person of strength and power

Others may define your identities in very different terms. You are:

1. The tsunami
2. The person who never takes action
3. The person who can't prioritize and gives the same crisis priority to everything
4. The pushover
5. The crazy risk taker
6. An egocentric powerhouse

In this light, through transparency and brevity, colleagues can call you forth. Ask them what they see in your leadership and when it is most compelling. You can proactively learn to use your identities, both those you believe you currently have and those you aspire to hold, in order to help you become the person you really want to be, act the way you really want to act, and positively influence the perception that others have of you.

WHAT IS CALLING FORTH?

When we call someone forth, we call on them to own their strength and to bring their full capacity of leadership to bear in the moment. Calling forth is most impactful when it clearly comes from a place of service to others and when it is grounded in the values and purpose of the leader. It builds on strengths in a collaborative way by sharing development. When we call forth we use positive reinforcement but also a mindset, a way of showing up as a leader who fights for the greatness within others. It starts with intention and is the key difference between transformational leadership (where leaders collaborate with employees to identify the needed change, create a vision, and action

the change with committed members of the group) and transactional leadership (focusing on supervision and compliance). Calling forth needs leaders to be authentic and conscious, working with conflict for the greater good. In the short term, calling forth is more motivational. In the longer term, it is a better way to frame the relationship. To do so requires knowing three key elements: the difference between “doing” and “being”, what identity you want to call forth and how your identity is perceived by others, and the behaviors that will help you unambiguously express your desired identity.

1. UNDERSTAND THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN DOING AND BEING

Your actions are the observable things you do as others see them. They are the ‘doing’ part of the equation. What is not so obvious and is open to interpretation as well as being the motivation behind your actions. This is where the ‘being’ part is at play. The key question is, ‘Who are you being when you take your actions?’ For example, when you critique a colleague’s presentation, are you being a leadership coach who wants to

nurture and guide your employees to success, or are you a demanding tyrant? Actions are not unambiguous in their intention and so the identity others perceive may not be the identity you aspire to or intend.

2. KNOW WHAT IDENTITY YOU WANT TO CALL FORTH

You can name and call forth the identity you want when you take an action by asking yourself: ‘Who do I want to be in this situation?’, ‘Do I want to be seen as someone who cares for my employees and only wants the best for them?’, ‘Who is needed in this situation now?’ Choose from your full range of identities. Be clear on the impact you want from your actions.

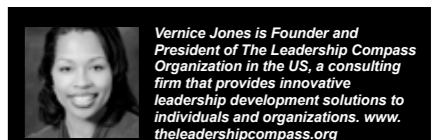
3. IDENTIFY THE BEHAVIORS THAT WILL HELP YOU EXPRESS YOUR CHOSEN IDENTITY

When calling yourself or others forth, know that there is no prescription for what to do or say. Choose your leader identity, then imagine how this identity will play out. What might this leader say? How might she behave? What language or postures are true to this persona? What messages does she need to send? Stay

focused on the values and purpose that guide you, and remember your intended impact. The more you practice channeling an identity at work, the more natural it will feel, and the more compelling you will become even in new, challenging situations.

LAST WORD

As a leader, you need to be competent at building self-advocacy and self-esteem, skill and knowledge, while calling them forth. This is such a different energy to calling them out. Go forth and inspire your teams to levels of effectiveness that they never imagined! **BIG**



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