

# Leading with charisma

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# What makes individuals persuasive?



# Entrepreneurial pitching : What determines success?

- N= 520 pitches over 13 years
- Controlling for patents, firm size, profitability, industry type, etc.
- We strongly predict the “Investor’s Offer” from the pitcher’s verbal charisma



What is he doing? How can such a context inform leadership in other settings?

# What does charisma signal?

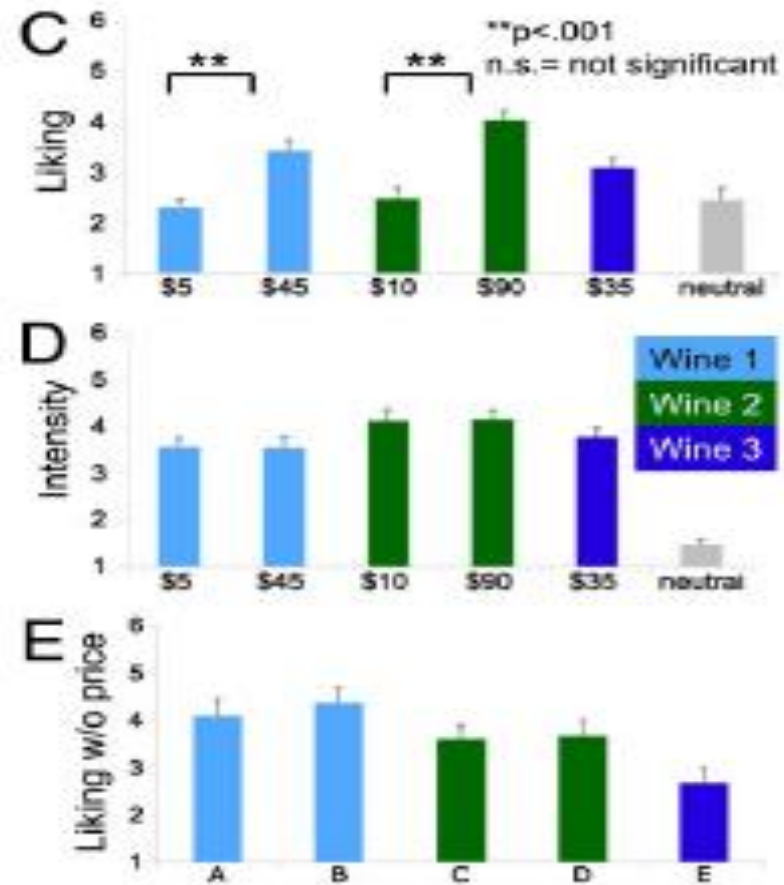
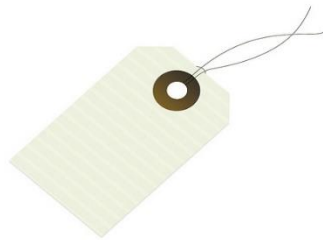
In a recent experiment we did, we held constant the pitching idea and the person, and had a professional actor deliver two versions of the speech: Participants saw either a charismatic or neutral delivery:

- Both pitchers seen as having an *equally feasible and innovative idea*; however, the charismatic pitcher was seen as:
  - Smarter
  - More creative
  - More inspiring
  - And as having a higher probability of getting financed.

Seems like observers believe charisma is an honest **signal** of leader ability (and it actually is, Akstinaite et al., 2023); maybe one reason they react to it.

# On signals: The labels around necks.....ours and wine bottles!

- When communicating the price of a wine, why do subjects evaluate the same wine as better when it is more “expensive”? (Plassman et al., 2008)



# It's not my fault; it's my brain's!

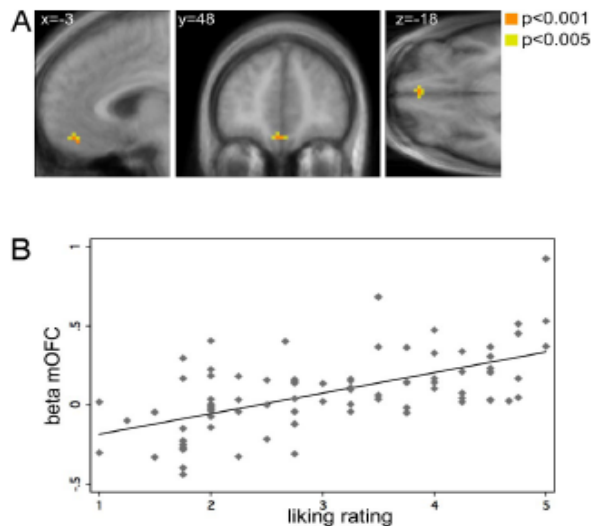


Fig. 4. Neural correlates of liking ratings. (A) Activity in the mOFC and the midbrain correlated with the reported pleasantness of the six liquids at degustation time. For illustration purposes, the contrast is shown both at  $P < 0.001$  and  $P < 0.005$  uncorrected and with an extend threshold of five voxels. (B) Correlation of pleasantness ratings and BOLD responses ( $r = 0.593$ ,  $P < 0.000$ ). Each point denotes a subject-price pair. The horizontal axis measures the reported pleasantness. The vertical axis computes the betas from the general linear model in a 5-mm spherical volume surrounding the area depicted in A.

- Is it all in the face (or other effects, e.g., being tall, a man, etc.)? Once classified is it over? Can one change the classification?

# Video cases

Let's discuss two video cases of the leadership influencing process:

- Paper Chase
- Dead Poet's Society

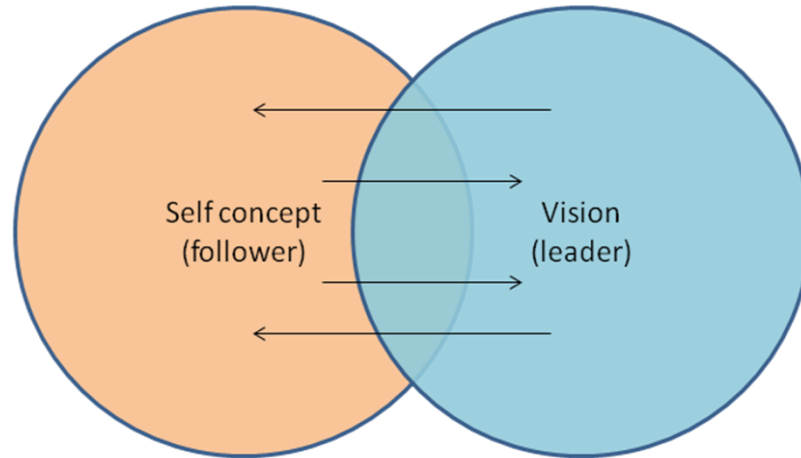


Pay close attention to the leadership styles depicted. We will compare and contrast what the two leaders are doing in terms of their influence tactics and the type of commitment or compliance they create in their followers.

Who is more inspirational? Why?

# Leadership is about identification and self-fulfilling prophecies!

Leaders must be able to **read** situations and federate followers around a vision so that they are intrinsically motivated and inextricably bound to the vision; if the vision succeeds, the followers succeed. And, ***following is voluntary!***



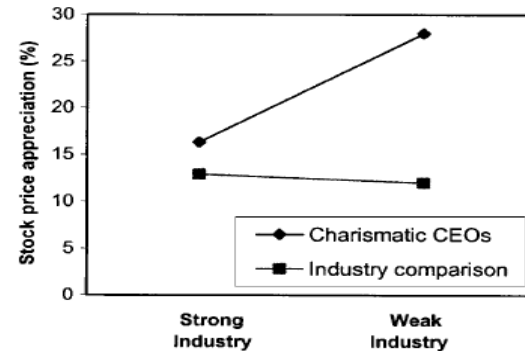
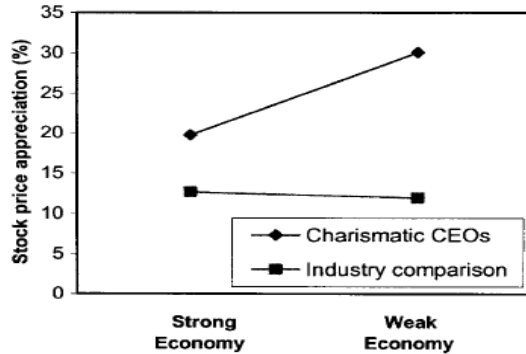
The self concept is about: Who am I? Am I worthy? Competent? Confident?



## Exercise: Just listen

- Preparation time 1 minute.
- In pairs spend 2 minutes each (please time it) to listen to each other explain an *important event in your childhood* that helped made you who you are.
- The other person listens and provides encouraging non-verbal feedback, non-lexical utterances, or brief statement of encouragement; but **cannot** interrupt, talk, or to ask questions.
- We will debrief afterwards

# Having charisma and vision matters much for organizational performance; especially in tough times (Flynn & Staw, 2004, *SMJ*). Why?



# Charisma's works in various conditions of performance certainty

**COMPANY PROFILE OF THE DAY**  
Eric Heart, Live from New York

**BlueTech**

**BlueTech stock price over the last quarter**

8.02%

APRIL MAY JUNE

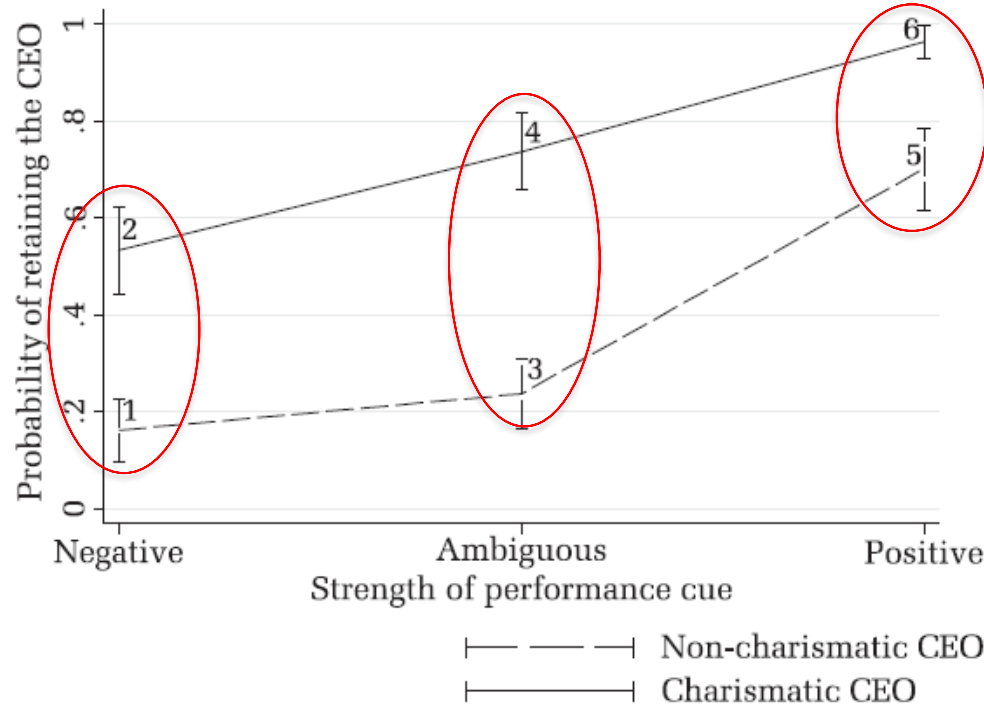
**Statement from Juergen Altman - CEO of BlueTech**

"I can feel the buzz and excitement the investors have about BlueTech. What lies ahead for us? Keep the bow of the ship steady and ensure that we will be the global leader in LED technology. Our journey ahead will be exciting, and long, but through higher R&D spending, targeted acquisitions, and attracting the best talent, we will get there soon. I am sure of that. Our shareholders will be rewarded with outstanding returns over the quarters to come."

**COMPANY PROFILE OF THE DAY**  
BlueTech

**NYSE NYSE Composite Index 3,676 -19.0106 -0.52%** **NYSE NYSE Composite Index 9,485 +2.0691 +0.02%** **OEX S&P 100 Index 737.07 +0.80 +0.11%** **RUT Russell 2000 Index (Nasdaq) 1,050 +2.5975 +0.25%** **SOX PHLX Semiconductor Index 1,000 -1.0000 -0.10%** **Industrial Average 14,776 -0.89 -0.0060%** **DJT Dow Jones Transportation Average 6,444 -2.95 -0.04%**

# “What’s in it for you?”



Jacquart & Antonakis (2015)

# What is charisma?

Values-based,  
symbolic, and emotion-laden  
leader **signaling**

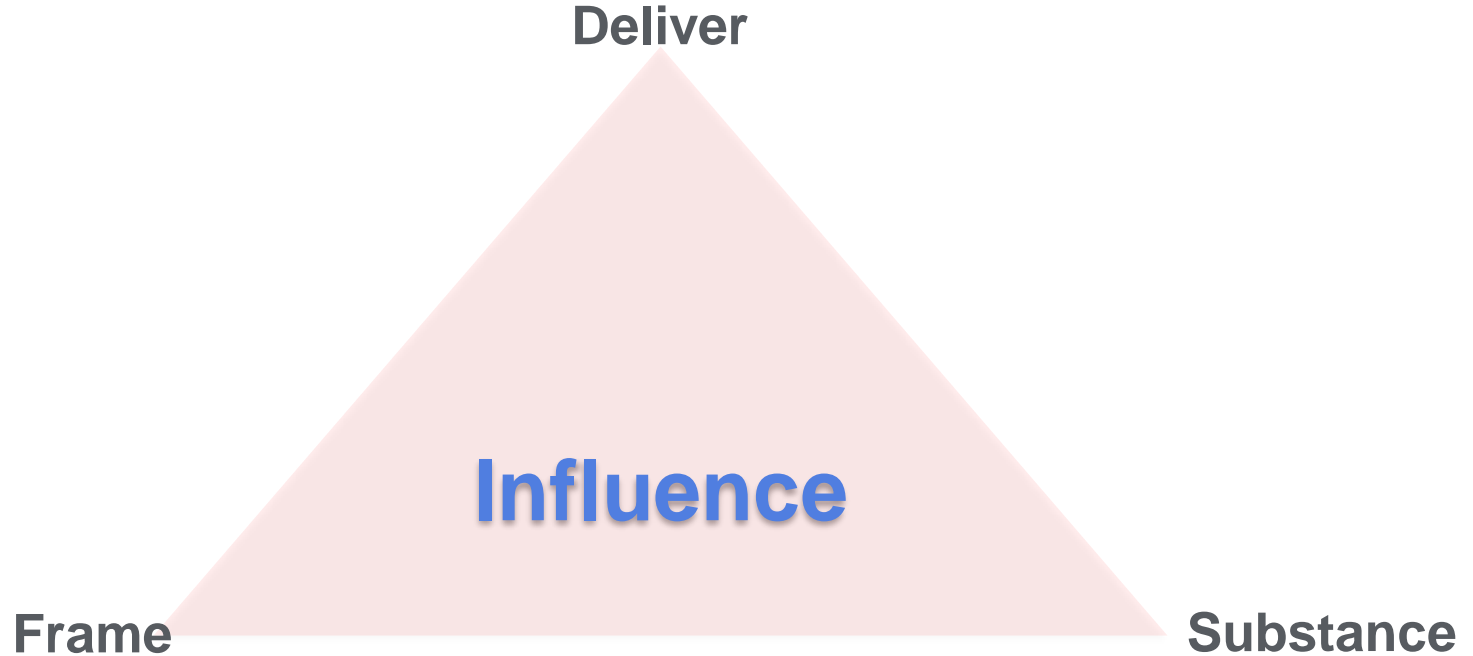


(Antonakis et al., 2016, *AROPOB*)

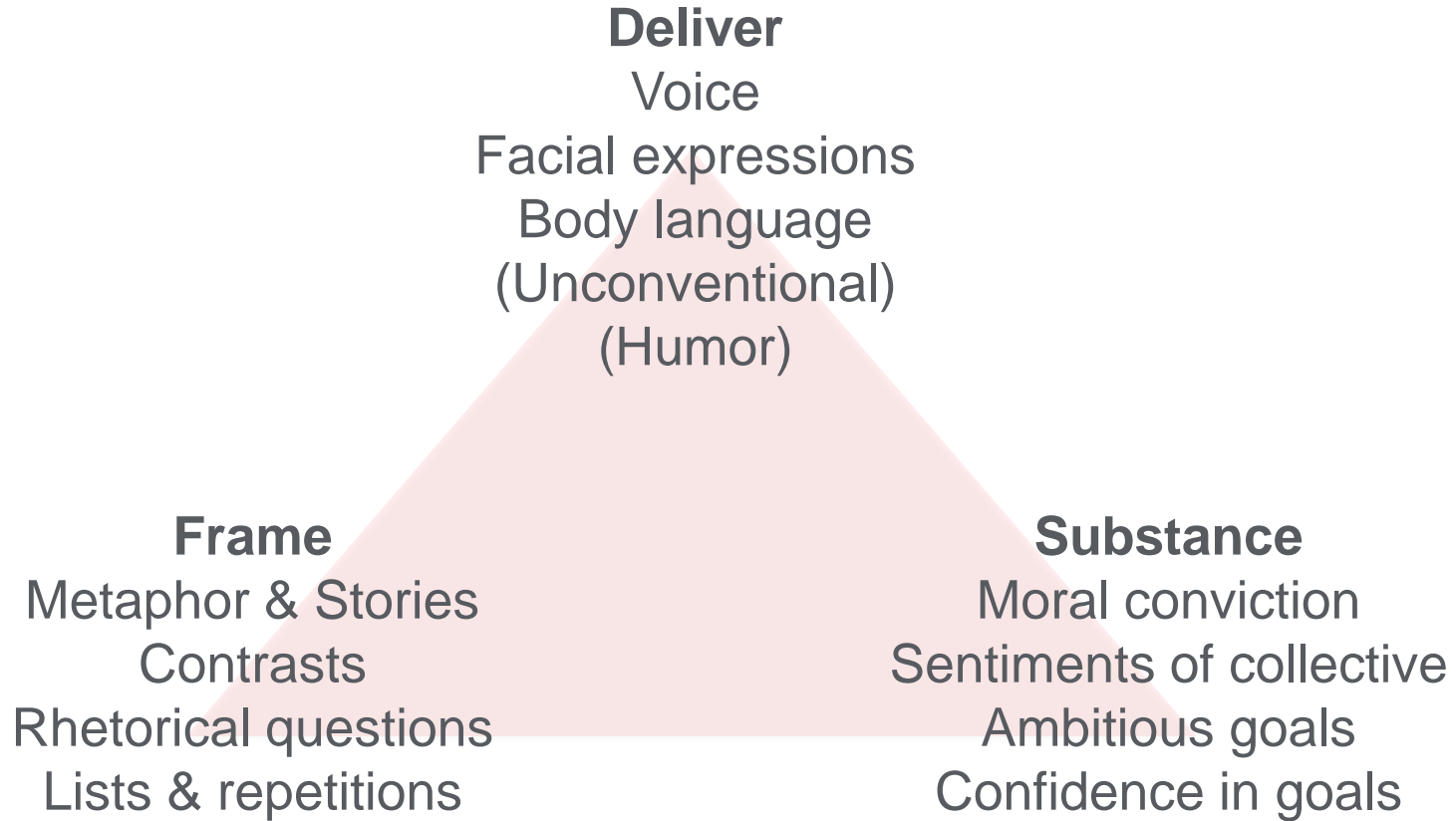
## Why signaling?

- The signal (e.g., use of metaphor, storytelling, values etc.) must be costly for it to be credible:
  - It is available to those who are more capable. As mentioned by Aristotle in *Poetics*: “But the greatest thing by far is to have a command of metaphor . . . it is the mark of genius” (e.g., **intelligence** determines ability to produce creative metaphors (Silvia & Beaty 2012))
  - It **attracts** those who share values (and repels others)
  - As a moral “contract” is used to **judge** leader behavior
  - Emotions must be signaled **genuinely**
  - Cannot keep up **pretense** in staged versus spontaneous settings
  - Leaders must know where to **pitch** the vision (and strategic goal)
  - Confidence in goal must be **realistic**

# Charisma: Values-based, symbolic, and emotion-laden leader signaling



# The charismatic leadership tactics





## Video case: Let's do a simple one first



# The master wordsmiths

[1] Now, our friends down in Tampa at the Republican convention [anecdote] were more than happy to talk about everything they think is wrong with America [contrast] but they didn't have much to say about how they'd make it right.

[2] They want your vote, [contrast] but they don't want you to know their plan.

[3] And that's because all they have to offer is the same prescription [metaphor] they've had for the last thirty years:

[1] "Have a surplus? [question] Try a tax cut."

[2] "Deficit too high? [question] Try another."

[3] "Feel a cold coming on? [question]

[1] Take two tax cuts,

[2] roll back some regulations, and

[3] call us in the morning [metaphor + humor]!"

## Video cases: Focus on how vision is created using the charisma tactics

- Dead poet's
- Wangari Maathai
- Kofi Anan

When you have some free time see:

- Invictus (<https://youtu.be/25Lb1YpSEic?si=MOP6ubOTVfc0CRRz> )
- Anita Roddick (<https://youtu.be/KtD6FEbilSs>)
- The contender (<https://youtu.be/b24YF3DPiWM>)
- Any Given Sunday ([https://youtu.be/m\\_iKg7nutNY](https://youtu.be/m_iKg7nutNY))
- King Henry V (<https://youtu.be/A-yZNMWFqvM>)

## What makes for a good story?

- Create characters that individuals can identify with (“good cop,” downtrodden, hero, ugly duckling, poor, etc.); make them as human as possible with flaws, particularities, quirks, needs!
- Put them in a situation that will trigger emotions (happiness, sadness, pride, fear, shame, embarrassment etc.)
- Create a plot, an intrigue: A puzzle; a problem; a challenge; an unfulfilled need.
- Solve the intrigue: Ideally something unexpected happens

Make the moral clear. What is the link between solving the intrigue, the character, and the “take-home” message? Does the story inspire one to be a better person? Can listeners people relate to it? Will it reflect their sentiments, identity?

## Some interesting findings.

- Charisma works equally well with males and females; (several studies show this).
- It works too with real workers (Antonakis, d'Adda, Weber, & Zehnder, 2023):



No bonuses

**Standard** speech



Bonuses

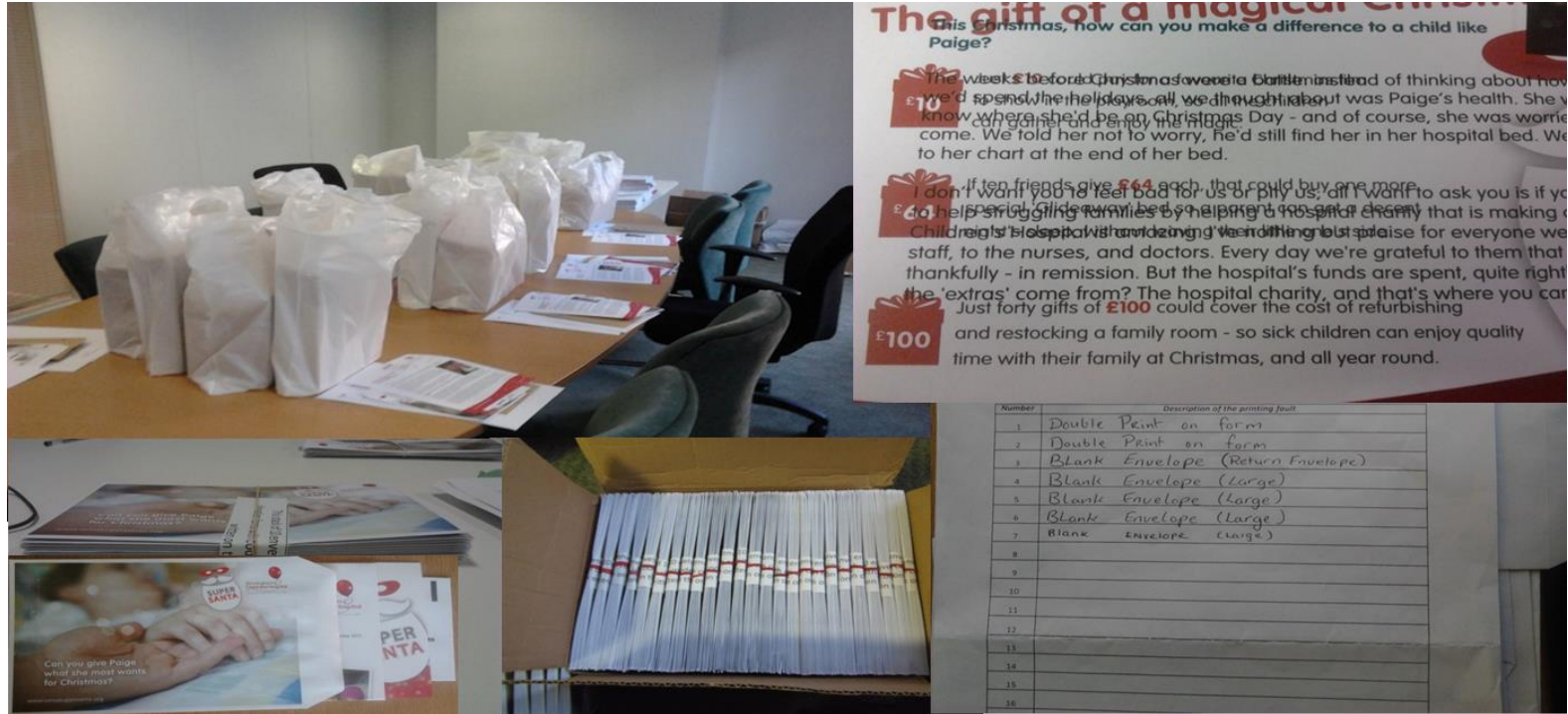
**Standard** speech



No bonuses

**Charisma** speech

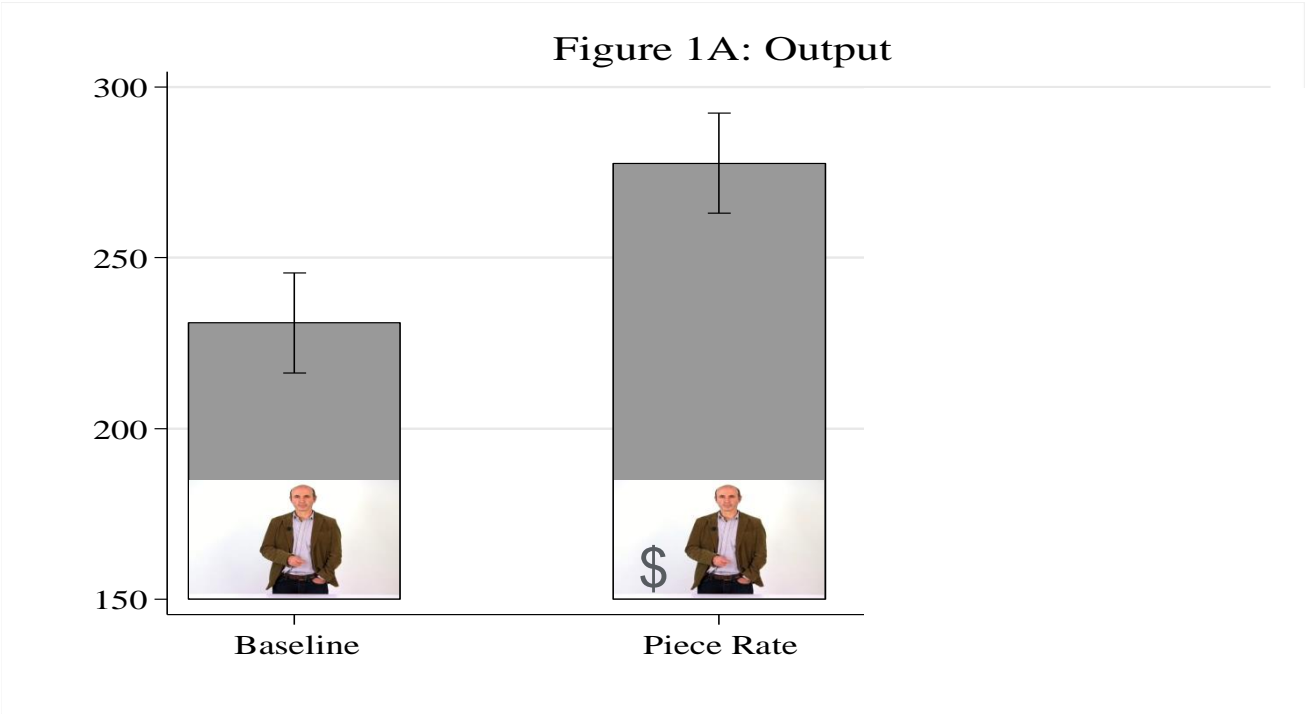
# The task



Let's see some snippets from the intro, middle, and end.

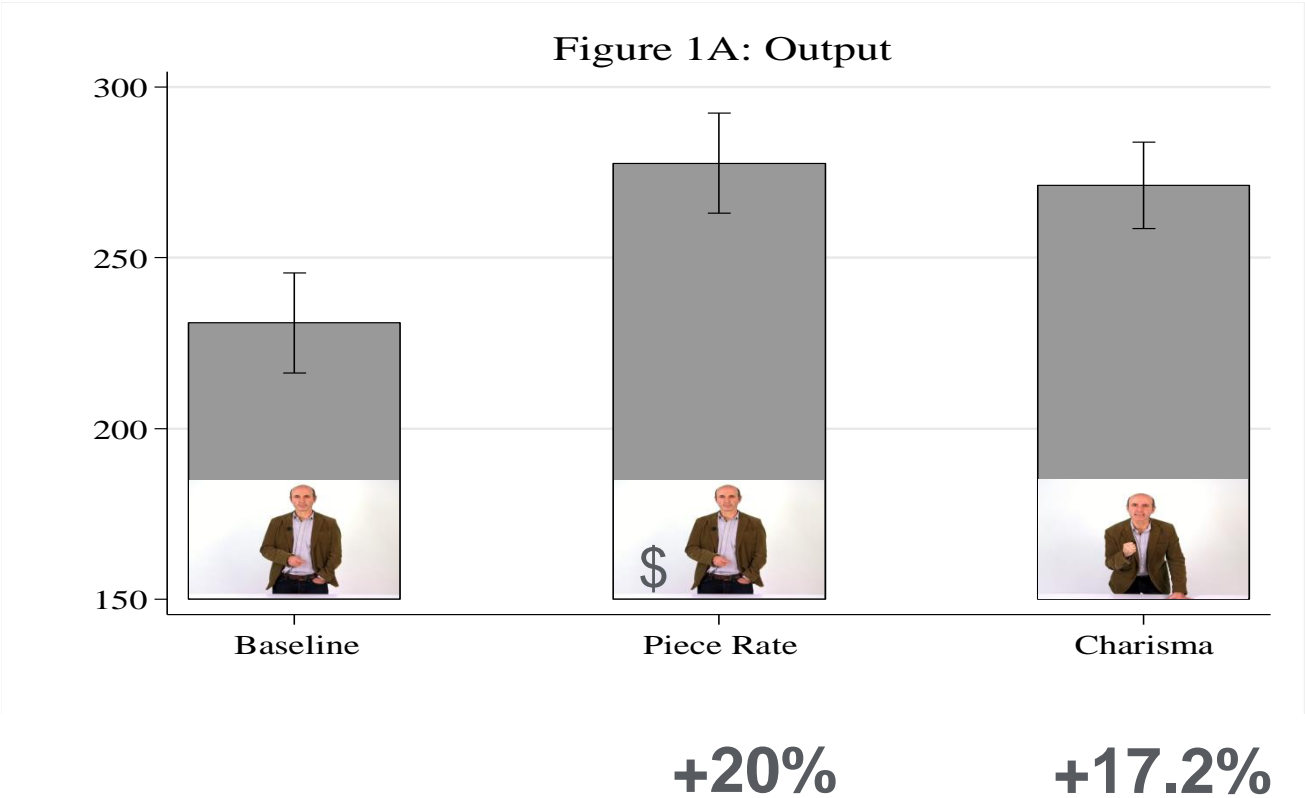
<http://www.hec.unil.ch/jantonakis/charisma.htm>

# Effect on performance



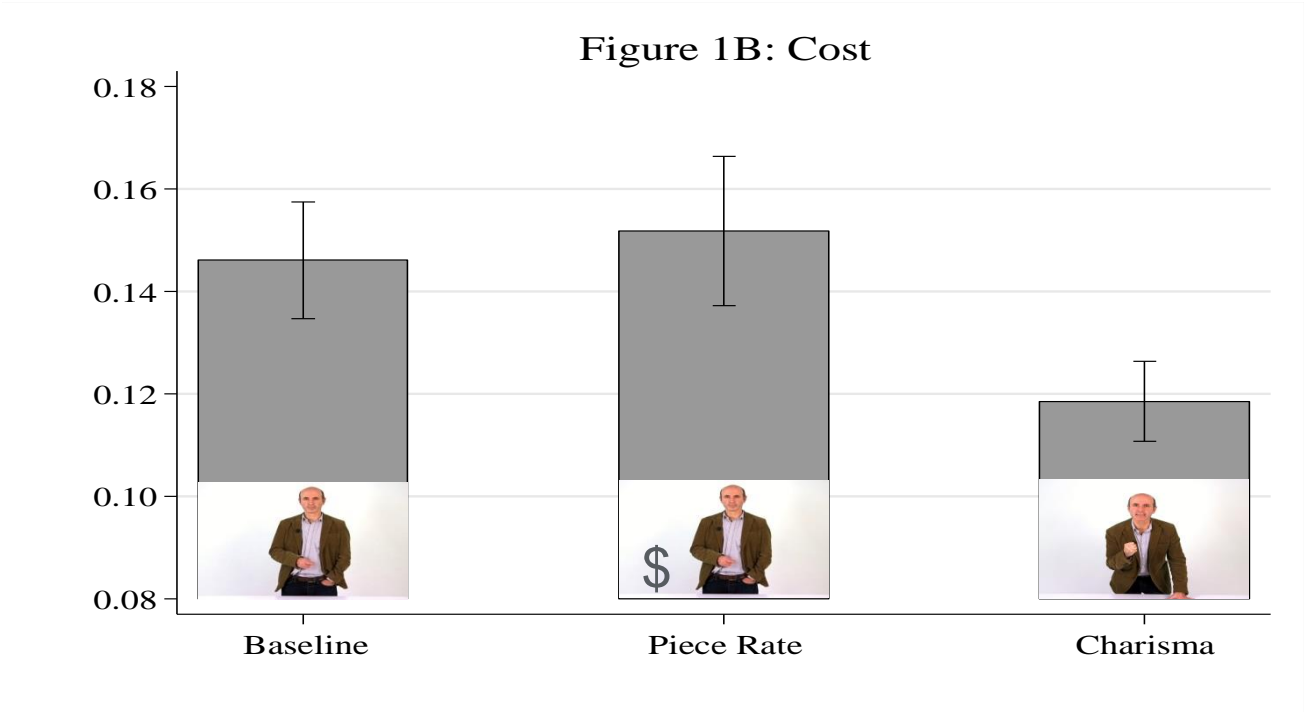
**+20%**

# Effect on performance

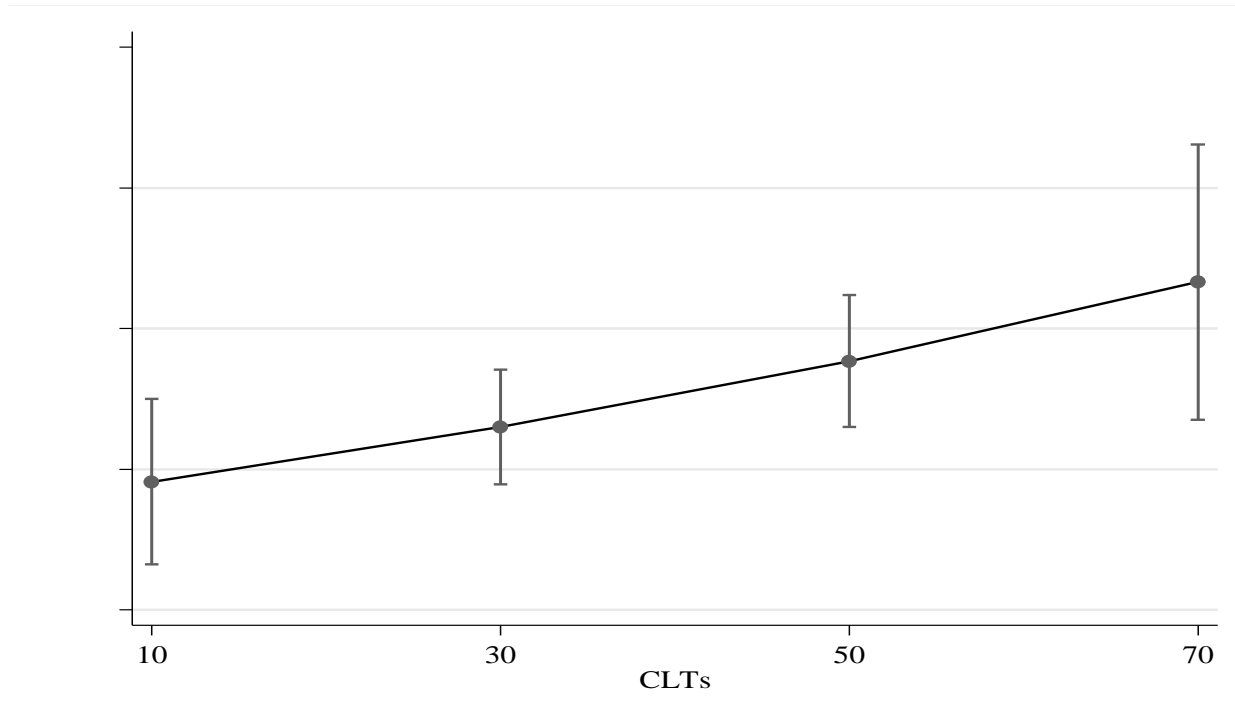




# Effect on cost



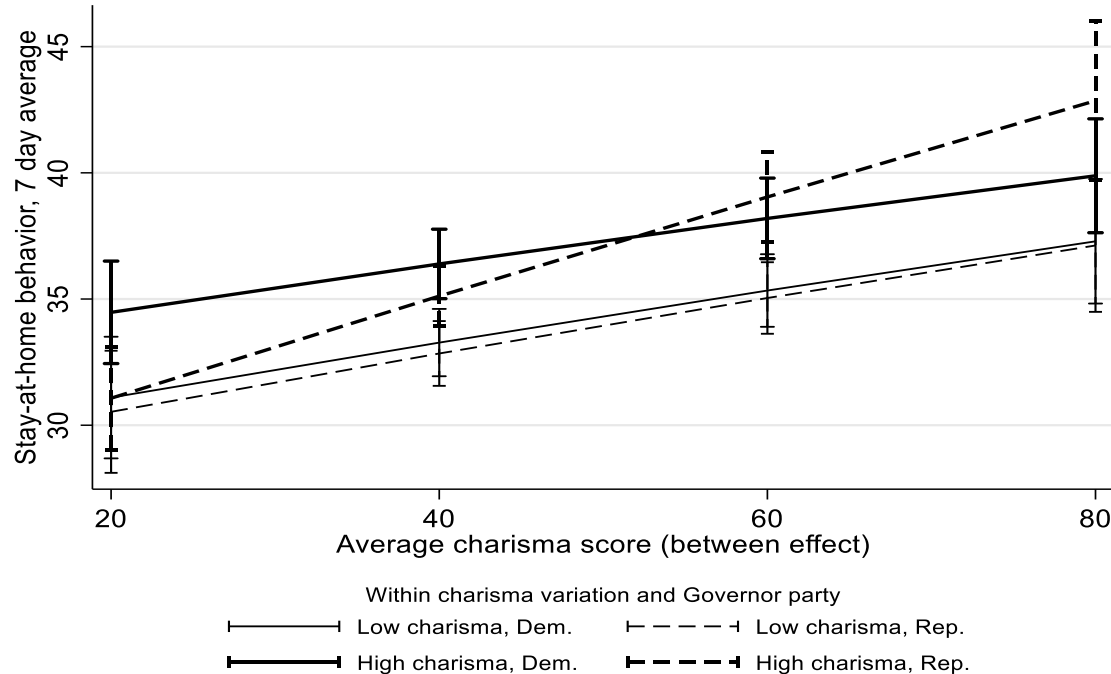
## And it works in TED too! An informal leadership setting



+20  
tactics  
→  
+44.3%  
views

From Tur, Harstad & Antonakis (2021): random sample of TED talks coded for the tactics to predict views (and we control for everything, including looks, voice, body language, topic, etc.); same for Twitter!

# U.S. state governor's charisma (whether man or woman) explains whether citizens stay at home, measured by smartphone movement (Jensen et al, 2023).



One standard deviation higher charisma signaling in governor speeches could potentially have saved 5,350 lives during the study period (02/28/2020–05/14/2020)

## You may find the following TED<sup>x</sup> talks interesting:



“Let’s face it: Charisma matters.”



“The science of storytelling”  
—see his book too!

# How to improve?

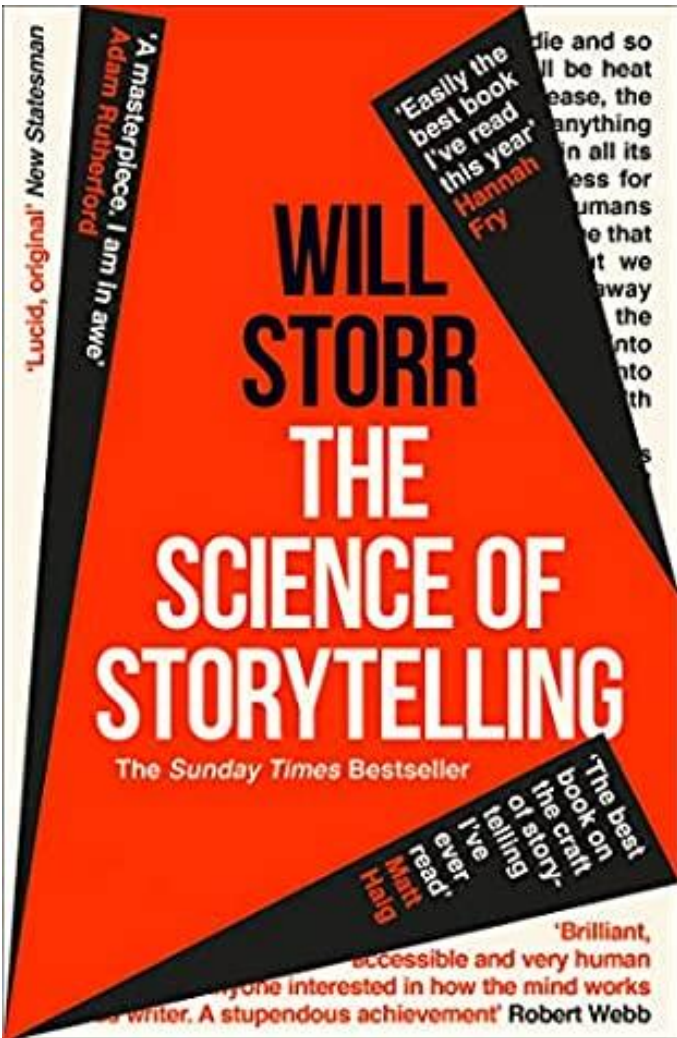
When you have some free time, scan my HBR article and think of how you can inject leadership tactics into your social interactions. What stories, metaphors, etc. can you use to make the vision happen, get followers behind you, and help concretize the strategic goals of your organization?

Think about:

- Formal speeches
- One-on-one situations
- Group meetings

Record yourself. Find a buddy to help you. Practice!





Until we meet again...



And a final lesson from a politician  
who has an MSc in Comm. (time  
permitting)