# Strategic Charismatic Leadership Communication:
## Bringing About a Self–Fulfilling Prophesy of the Leader's Vision

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## STRATEGIC CHARISMATIC LEADERSHIP COMMUNICATION: BRINGING ABOUT A SELF-FULFILLING PROPHESY OF THE LEADER'S VISION

The changing complexities of the world today make leadership and the communication of the strategic vision essential for organizational success. A compelling vision helps strategic leaders renew and redirect the efforts of the firm (Nanus, 1992), especially during times of uncertainty and change. Turning the strategic leader's vision into a shared vision begins with the message itself. An effective vision creates a mental image of an idealized future (Awamleh & Gardner, 1999), which the strategic leader first constructs and then communicates in order to mobilize followers (Holladay & Coombs, 1993, 1994).

When strategic leaders create and communicate their vision in a way that instills confidence, these raised expectations hold the potential to increase follower performance and improve achievement outcomes (Eden, 1984). When optimistic expectations result in positive behavior, the expectations become a self-fulfilling prophecy (Merton, 1948), also known as the Pygmalion effect (Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968). A self-fulfilling prophecy or the Pygmalion effect in the workplace has been defined as "an increase in subordinate performance as a result of raised supervisor expectations" (Karakowsky, DeGama, & McBey, 2012, p. 579).

Pygmalion effect research has been conducted in educational (Babad, 1995; Harris & Rosenthal, 1985; Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968; Rosenthal & Rubin, 1978), military (Eden & Shani, 1982), and organizational settings (King, 1971, 1974; Sutton & Woodman, 1989), and the findings of this research explains how the high expectations of a teacher or leader results in higher achievement among students or employees. Over the years, self-fulfilling prophecy research has revealed when a leader has high expectations of followers, employee productivity is high; but, if leader expectations are low, employee productivity is also low (Livingston, 1969). Wong and Hui (2006) explain "the idea is that the way one person treats another can, for better or worse, transform one's motivation, expectations and confidence" (p. 496). Karakowsky, DeGama, and McBey (2012) state, "the Pygmalion effect has served as a colourful, conceptual reminder of the power of supervisory expectations in enhancing subordinate performance" (p. 579).

Strategic charismatic leadership communication holds the potential to turn the leader's vision into a self-fulfilling prophecy for the organization, with proximity of the leader, self-efficacy of followers, and value congruence between leader and followers as influential variable. Proximity refers to "conditions that affect vertical and lateral influence by bringing people together or imposing separation" (Cox, Pearce, & Perry, 2003, p. 60). Self-efficacy of followers is the strength of belief that individuals hold regarding potential to perform tasks or achieve goals (Bandura, 1997). Value system congruence is defined by

Krishnan (2002) as "the extent of agreement between the leader's value system and the follower's value system" (p. 22). The purpose of this chapter is to present a conceptual and theoretical framework for the association between strategic charismatic leadership communication and the self-fulfilling prophecy of the leader's vision when leader proximity, follower self-efficacy, value congruence, and similarity attraction exist between leader and followers.

## Leadership Charisma and Charismatic Leadership

Some of the earliest leadership studies identified *charisma* as an extraordinary personal attribute of a divinely inspired, gifted individual (Weber, 1947; Willner, 1984). Taking this view of personal charisma has resulted in the development of leader-centric theories of leadership. According to Galvin, Waldman, and Balthazard (2010), the leader-centric paradigm of leadership "emphasizes how exceptionally effective leaders communicate and interact with others in a manner than inspires them to higher levels of performance and commitment" (p. 509). Leader-centric theories of charismatic leadership are focused primarily on the leader's charismatic personality, but these perspectives do not take into consideration the historical, social, or motivational influences of follower perceptions and process of choice in adopting the charismatic leader's vision.

To expand the understanding of leader charisma, other researchers placed charismatic leadership not within the personality of the individual but rather within the social and historical context (Blau, 1963; Chinoy, 1961; Friedland, 1964; Wolpe, 1968). These researchers speculated that charismatic leadership is more likely to emerge in organic settings rather than within bureaucracies (Pillai, 1995). Pillai (1995) explains, "one of the most important determinants of charismatic leadership processes is the presence of a crisis" (p. 333).

Recently, personality-based and contextually-determined theories of charismatic leadership (Conger & Kanungo, 1987) have come under scrutiny because they share similarities with narcissistic and destructive leadership as well as those individuals who manipulate others and abuse their power (Galvin, Waldman, & Bathazard, 2010; House & Howell, 1992; Padilla, Hogan, & Kaiser, 2007; Raelin, 2005; Sankowsky, 1995). As a result, theories of charismatic leadership theories were extended to include follower perceptions of leader behavior. For example, Conger, Kanungo, and Mennon (2000) conceptualized charismatic leadership as "an attribution based on follower perceptions of the leader's behavior" (p. 748), and these descriptions of charismatic leadership (e.g., Conger & Kanungo, 1994; Conger, Kanungo, Mennon, & Mather, 1997) place the locus of charismatic leadership within the social relationship between leader and followers.

Willner's (1984) argues charismatic leadership is "neither personality-based nor conceptually-determined, but rather the phenomenon is largely relational and perceptual" (Conger & Kanungo, 1987, p. 638). Willner (1984) states, "It is not what the leader is but what people see the leader as that counts in generating the charismatic relationship" (p. 14). More recent authors agree that charisma resides in the leader-follower relationship but argue it is the followers' self-concept that determines the nature of the relationship (Shamir, House, & Arthur, 1993). House and Shamir (2005) postulate followers with a low self-concept form a personalized charismatic relationship with the leader and those with a high self-concept form a socialized charismatic relationship with the leader (House & Shamir, 2005, see p. 102). Self-concept based charismatic leadership described by Shamir, House, and Arthur (1993) suggests "charismatic leaders increase the intrinsic valence of efforts and goals by linking them to valued aspects of followers' self-concept" (Shamir, Zakay, & Popper, 1998, p. 388). Therefore, "the leader and the follower are key players in the construction of the charismatic relationship" (Gardner & Avolio, 1998, p. 34).

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