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LEADERSHIP & BUSINESS PODCAST

EPISODE 204: ERIN BERUBE – YOUR LEADERSHIP STYLE

Erin Berube

We like to say belief follows behavior. You know, maybe you've got some influence, and you believe that you're a little influential. You might not believe that you've got advocacy yet, but you start showing up more confidently, more powerfully. You start actually practicing advocacy as a behavior, and then the belief follows.

Female Voice

From William & Mary in Williamsburg, Virginia. This is Leadership & Business, produced by the William & Mary School of Business and its MBA program. Offered in four formats the full-time, the part-time, the online, and the executive MBA. For more information, visit wm.edu.

Ken White

Welcome to Leadership & Business, the podcast that brings you the latest and best thinking from today's business leaders from across the world. Sharing strategies, information, and insight that help you become a more effective leader, communicator, and professional. I'm your host, Ken White. Thanks for listening. You have control regarding the way you show up. And as a leader or aspiring leader, you also have control over the way others perceive you. So developing your leadership style is important. It can work for you or against you. Erin Berube is a Managing Director and Executive Coach at Admired Leadership, a development program focused on the leadership behaviors that create loyal followership and exceptional results. She says the right leadership style will help you inspire others. She joins us on the podcast today to discuss leadership style and some of its elements, including presence, influence, and advocacy. Here's our conversation with Erin Berube of Admired Leadership.

Ken White

Well, Erin, it's great to see you. Thanks for taking your time and sharing your expertise on the podcast again. So nice to see you.

Erin Berube

You as well, Ken. Thank you so much for having me. It's an honor to be here.

Ken White

Well, you are doing some real interesting work in coaching, coaching leaders, aspiring leaders. And one of the things you talk about is presence and sort of developing your presence and your leadership style. When you do that, who are you working with? Who are your clients?

Erin Berube

It's a good question because most of them are senior leaders. So these are your C suites, your VP level, and above. And it's an interesting question because they seem to need it more than younger leaders, people who are new and rising and upcoming. Not that it's not applicable to those folks, but when you become more senior in an organization, your competence is assumed. It comes with your title. People just believe that you know what you're doing in your role because you have a C-suite title or you have a Vice President title. The issue that we have with those leaders is that they haven't learned how to create followership, and leadership style and presence is a huge component to that, to creating inspiration and motivation in your team, so that it's not just about your competence, but it's also about your character that lends to your overall credibility as a leader.

Ken White

So how do you encourage leaders and explain that to them? Listen, some of this is because of your title. You need to work on these other areas.

Erin Berube

Yeah. So it's funny because leaders will come to me and say well, I received some feedback that I just don't have presence, and I don't know what that means. So that's a very common question that we get is what do I do with this feedback? I don't know what to do with it. And I started off by explaining I look at it as three rungs on a ladder of leadership style. The very first lowest rung would be leadership presence. And that's often described as this intangible quality that makes others perceive someone to be a leader. So it involves the ability to assert yourself, inspire, make a strong impression that encourages others to follow you. Leadership presence is largely about communication, both verbal nonverbal, and it's often associated with traits like charisma, confidence, emotional intelligence, and the ability to remain composed under pressure. So that's leadership presence. When we think of leaders, and we say, ooh, that person, they have presence to them, that's really what it breaks down to. It's their communication style. When we move up the rung from there, what we want to do is make leaders move from having just presence to giving them influence. And influence, as the next level, refers to their ability to affect the behaviors and the decisions or the actions of others. So you're moving from just having this presence, this feeling of credibility, to actually being able to evoke change in people, and it doesn't necessarily involve any formal authority whatsoever. Influence is often achieved through persuasion, inspiration, and building relationships. So leaders with

strong influence, they are able to align their team towards a common goal and then guide their actions effectively. They usually inspire trust, respect, loyalty, which in turn empowers others to take action. So you've got presence as that first rung of the ladder you move up to influence where you're starting to create change in the behaviors of the people around you. The furthest level up the next one is advocacy. So that's your third rung, the highest rung of this ladder. And advocacy and leadership is about standing up for your team, your ideas, a cause, anything that you believe in. A leader who advocates effectively is able to represent and promote their team's interests and often in the face of challenges or opposition. So that could involve navigating organizational politics, negotiating resources, driving change. Leaders who are good advocates are seen as supportive and protective of their teams, and that, in turn, boosts morale, boosts engagement. These advocates are the ones that you would follow to the parking lot if they left. They would have a whole string of people just following them out the door. So you've got those three levels of presence and then influence after and advocacy as that top level. And in order to achieve advocacy, you have to get really good at influence and then understand where you stand on the spectrum of presence.

Ken White

Oh, how interesting. As you're talking about advocacy, I'm picturing people at C suite meetings and at board meetings, the great advocates and then the others who have the ability, they have the knowledge, they have the information, but they just can't get to that level. Is there one level that's more difficult to get to? Is it, for example, moving from presence to influence or influence to advocacy? Is there one step that's harder, or is it sort of just come along?

Erin Berube

Yeah, it comes along. They build on each other. So I think once you achieve influence, you start to look around and find out that you have advocacy without knowing that you even have it. So we like to say belief follows behavior. So maybe you've got some influence, and you believe that you're a little influential. You might not believe that you've got advocacy yet, but you start showing up more confidently, more powerfully. You start actually practicing advocacy as a behavior, and then the belief follows. You see what that impact has on people around you and your ability to promote interests and represent your team in a way that advocates for what they need. In the face of challenge, you start to believe, oh, I have advocacy now. So it's not really as important how you feel about how confident you are, how influential you are. I'm more concerned about how confident and influentially you're behaving in each moment.

Ken White

Let's talk a little bit back down to presence. I've talked to people who say, I just don't have it. There's nothing I can do. They sort of give up. What are some of the things that people can do to establish presence?

Erin Berube

Yeah, I think the first thing to do is to recognize that it is not about your personality. It's about your behavior. So in a lot of leadership literature, there's typically a bias towards psychology. And while that's good context, we find it to be an excuse for bad behavior. So I'm an introvert. You can't expect me to be influential. You can't expect me to have presence, or I'm a blue or a red, so bear with me as I fly off the handle. These are all things that I hear as a coach very often. So we want to focus on the behavioral view of leadership, where I coach out of at Admire Leadership. That's the bread and butter of what we do. Leadership is comprised of our cumulative behavior. So while our psychology might color how we behave as a default, we get to consciously choose how we behave in each situation. So we're very specific and deliberate in our behaviors to drive outcomes. So that's the first thing that I would tell somebody who says I'm just not influential. I just can't do it. My question is, is it that you can't do it, or are you just choosing not to do it? We often mistake our personality with just strong habits. That we've practiced over time and have not been corrected for decades at a time. And so we think that that's personality or psychology when it's not. It's really just the behavioral choices. And then the question that I would have is, well, where do we need to move this leader? Are they too powerful? Do they need to become a little bit more blended in their leadership? Or are they too approachable attractive? On the other side of the spectrum, are they showing up as intimidated, as meek? And there are specific behavioral cues that are verbal, nonverbal, and status markers that we can teach leaders to help them achieve that sweet spot of being powerful enough to be heard and attractive enough to be followed.

Ken White

That's an interesting term. Status marker. Give us an example of what one might be.

Erin Berube

Sure. So let's say you walk into a meeting, and you're always sitting at the back of the room or far away from the power center because you're afraid of being called on. You're afraid to speak up. So you're just going to sit as far away from whoever is facilitating the meeting as possible. A status marker to be more powerful would be simply just to move closer to the power, move closer to the authority, and practice speaking up on one thing that's outside of the realm of your institutional knowledge that you have. Show that you have thought leadership around something that's different than what people expect from you. Those are very easy ways to show a little bit more status in that setting.

Ken White

We'll continue our discussion with Erin Berube in just a minute. Our podcast is brought to you by the William & Mary School of Business. This year the Financial Times, Princeton Review, US News and World Report, and CEO Magazine have all named the William & Mary MBA program one of the best in the US and the world. If you're thinking about pursuing an MBA, consider one that has outstanding faculty, excellent student support, and a brand that's highly respected, the William & Mary MBA program. Reach out to our admissions team to learn which of our four MBA programs best fits you the full-time, the part-time, the online, and the executive. Check out the MBA program at William & Mary at wm.edu. Now back to our conversation with executive coach Erin Berube.

Ken White

Whether it's presence, influence, or advocacy, this is a lot of perhaps getting out of the comfort zone, correct?

Erin Berube

It is. It is. And it's like any muscle. The more you lift it, the more you practice it, the better you get at it.

Ken White

What kind of feedback are you getting from your clients in terms of that comfort zone piece? I hear you, Erin, I get. Hmm, it's really tough for me to do X, Y, or Z. Is there some commonalities that you see?

Erin Berube

Yeah, you know, I think the leaders that I work with, I'm blessed to have a suite of clients that are just so committed to getting better. So it's not very often that I have a client telling me, I don't know if I'm going to do this. I don't think that I can because the folks that I work with really, they want to make their people and their situations better every day. So they are constantly having that growth mindset of sure, I'll try this, and sure, I'll practice that. And the behavioral skills that we teach are so easy. They're so bite-sized, and they come across as just obvious when you hear them that you think, wow, okay, yeah, that makes total sense, I can do it. And it's not a major shift. Authenticity is really about consistency of your leadership. Are you showing up the same way to everyone regardless of the triggers, regardless of what's happening around you? So we don't want you to sway too far from your range of where you are. We want you to just make subtle tweaks to the things that you say, the way that you say them, and then some behavioral status markers that you do to show up a little bit more powerfully if that's where you want to go on the spectrum.

Ken White

You're working, as you mentioned, more senior leaders. What kind of advice do you have for younger, newer professionals as they're just trying to make their way through and maybe build a personal brand?

Erin Berube

Yeah, advocacy is huge for those folks because I think there's a tendency to wait around for something to happen or to just wait for a promotion to be handed or to sit around and say, well, I'm doing a good job, and I believe that they are going to see it. And they forget how to have advocacy for themselves and what they want. So learning how to promote yourself in a way that doesn't feel icky, that actually feels very powerful but supportive and creates followership, that's a skill set that I love working with younger leaders on because it's something that's not often practiced with them. And it's incredibly important, especially when you think of women when you think of diverse talent and minorities. Advocacy plays a huge role in continuing to propel them inside their organizations.

Ken White

Yeah. And it feels funny, right? It doesn't feel natural. You're just trying to do your job and do good work, and it doesn't feel right saying, telling the boss, look at the great work I've done. But it's necessary, isn't it?

Erin Berube

It is. It's necessary. And again, it doesn't have to be done in a way that makes you feel like a used car salesman. There are ways to influence without authority, like you mentioned before, in very natural, authentic, generous ways that add value to everyone around you while also adding value to yourself.

Ken White

But that's a key point, though, not just yourself, but those around you, because leaders will recognize that, won't they?

Erin Berube

Yes, absolutely.

Ken White

You mentioned a couple of times belief follows behavior. Can you talk a little bit more about that? That sounds cool, and it makes sense, but can you give us a little more on that?

Erin Berube

Yeah, you know, one of my favorite quotes is from Senator John McCain, and when he was a Vietnam prisoner of war, he said that sometimes he had to act brave to be brave. And I might be misquoting him in that, but the message is that we don't always feel it on the inside. We don't always feel confident. And that's okay. You don't need to. All you need to do is act confidently, behave in a way that you want to show up, that creates that presence that you want to have, garners the influence, and then leads to the advocacy that you need to move things forward.

Ken White

There's a little impostor syndrome in all of us. Is that a correct statement?

Erin Berube

Oh, absolutely. I mean, when you study the literature around the psychology of imposter syndrome, it's typically formed in our formative years. So, for example, let's say I'm in the fifth grade, and I stand up to speak in class, and somebody makes fun of me, or my voice cracks or something happens. The imposter inside of me is going to say, oh, you can't speak up anymore. And that's going to stick with me for decades into my corporate career. Oh, I can't speak up because people might make fun of me. And it's designed as a way for your brain to protect you, to protect you from the onslaught of just ridicule, really. And the question that I always ask leaders who are still grappling with that today when they're far along in their careers is that protection mechanism was put in place at a time in your life when you needed it, but do you still need that protection today? You are an adult human being who is incredibly competent with a long list of accolades. Do you still need to be listening to that protection? Is that something that you really need to do? And if the answer is no, okay, so how do we behave differently? How do we show up and practice it?

Ken White

Of all the people I've met through the podcast, through our alumni, through corporate connections, so many leaders and CEOs who are just doing incredible work will say, I can't even believe I have this job. It impresses them, and they're like, and they're going to find out about me sooner or later, and it's all over. So it seems like it's fairly human to feel that way.

Erin Berube

It really is. Especially when you're looking around, and you don't see anyone like you at the table. You can start to wonder, how did I get here? Did I luck into this? Or what exactly did I do? And what I found working with clients is that the more awareness you create with them around the intentionality of their behaviors, just making them aware of how they deliver their feedback, how they make decisions, what exactly it is that they are doing when they're communicating. Verbally nonverbally, making them aware of their

intentionality, they start to attribute their success to what they are doing. And it doesn't feel like you're lucking into it anymore because you're starting to be more intentional and aware of your specific behaviors in these different categories.

Ken White

How do you coach leaders to get into their mindset that their leadership style not only affects them but affects the entire organization?

Erin Berube

I love that question, Ken, because I always tell leaders they'll come to me. The ones who have this particular situation will tell me that they have a team problem. And I'll say, well, that's unfortunate because I don't help leaders with team problems. I help teams with leader problems. And it usually starts off the conversation immediately, like, whoa, okay, let's turn the mirror and let's look at ourselves and see what are we doing to create, promote, and allow the situation around you.

Ken White

So what advice do you have for leaders now who might be struggling a little bit with their leadership style, or they may not be able to even pinpoint who they are and how they lead? What would you tell them?

Erin Berube

Yeah, I would tell them to have a little bit more mindfulness around what exactly it is that they are doing. Sort of the cause-and-effect feedback loop where when I do this, this is the result that happens, and start to become more aware of that. A lot of people don't even think about that piece of it. They go, and they perform, and they speak in a meeting, or they might ask some questions of people, but they're not really thinking deeply about what the reaction is from others. That reaction will tell you everything. And then you could also ask for feedback. It's so important to have mentors above and below you in an organization because you want to be learning holistically from all of the different personalities mindsets of an organization and asking those questions. So, Ken, I would ask you what could I do differently next time we're on a podcast together. Just create more awareness around your personal growth and development and take ownership of it because it's ultimately your responsibility.

Ken White

That's our conversation with Erin Berube, and that's it for this episode of Leadership & Business. Our podcast is brought to you by the William & Mary School of Business, home of the MBA program, offered in four formats the full-time, the part-time, the online, and the executive MBA. Check out the William & Mary MBA program at wm.edu. Thanks to

our guest, Erin Berube, and thanks to you for joining us. I'm Ken White, wishing you a safe, happy, and productive week ahead.

Female Voice

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