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Inspirational Leadership

How is it that certain leaders motivate you and other do not? This is particularly an interesting question within the marketing communications industry, which tends to attract independent-minded leaders...and followers.

Any leader who inspires others at your firm is probably good at articulating a vision that is compelling. They also find constant opportunities to interpret the meaning around them, putting it into the context of the vision that has been crafted collaboratively.

You'll also find that such leaders keep common goals constantly present, lead by example, and certainly aren't afraid to fall outside the bounds of normal behavior.

One of the most common traits of inspirational leaders is their ability to capture the shared soul of your firm through the telling of stories. These stories are repeated to prospective clients, new employees, new acquaintances, and in marketing materials.

Recently someone visited Carmichael Lynch, an ad agency in Minneapolis. As she took the typical visitor tour, they stopped by a small conference room. In the center was a low glass-topped coffee table, sitting on a block of mangled metal. "This is the Mitsubishi conference room," they said. "Oh, I didn't realize you had Mitsubishi as a client," she responded. "No, we don't. But we pitched them and they didn't pick us. So we got one of their cars and the whole agency went out together to see it get crushed. That coffee table is their car."

That is the kind of story that captures the soul of the firm and is seldom forgotten. Stories are selections from the past that illustrate what you want people to know about you. Next time you have the chance to pitch your firm on the phone or in person, make note of the stories you are telling, and try to determine what those choices are communicating about what kind of firm you have now.

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