

Ethos and Strategies for Strengthening Credibility in Leaders

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Abstract: *Overall, I can summarize all the work for my paper as a fight for some principles I believe in. It can be called a wake-up call, as we should not follow someone based on their earnings, but based on what they stand for, on who they truly are. As with all human endeavours, ethos is a part of business. I have learned that, if something you have to say might influence at least a small percentage of the world, you should speak your mind with every chance you get.*

Keywords: *ethos, leader, credibility, fairness, follow, believe, trust, analysis.*

1. Introduction

The main purpose of this paper is to demonstrate the need to use more trumps when we want to strengthen our credibility. For a more thorough analysis, I will only focus on two attributes, namely those that I consider, perhaps, the most important in influencing the public: ethos and credibility.

Therefore, in my paper, I present what ethos and leadership mean and, of course, how they can be used in speeches. The reason I consider them the most important features in delivering a speech is that they incorporate a multitude of imperative features. Whenever I reflect on these terms and their use, most of all, I run into the need for intelligence.

To prove my hypothesis that “a speaker must represent in the public’s eye both an ethical character and a true leader”, I have chosen to analyse and compare the speeches of Nelson Mandela and those of Donald Trump - both leaders, recognized by the whole world.

The topic I am addressing is of real, eternal importance. Speeches have not begun and will not end with our era. Speeches have existed since the beginning of the world and will continue until it ends and in one way or another they represent a part of our lives. At least, when we are the speakers, we shall do it by the book, and when we are part of the audience, we shall know how to identify the pros and cons most objectively.

To be as close to the truth as possible, I have decided to consult all the sources that address this topic, in order to support the various hypotheses that I will present in the present paper.

2. Research methods

I have decided to use neo-Aristotelian criticism and the interview as methods of validating all the statements made in the theoretical part of my paper. The former might be closer to philosophy, to the human side, whilst the latter, certainly closer to business.

Neo-Aristotelian criticism involves listening to the speaker’s voice. The Neo-Aristotelian method was the first formal method of rhetorical criticism developed in the field of communication. It is called Aristotelian to make a direct reference to *Aristotle’s Rhetoric*, preceded by “Neo”, and has been adapted to the 20th century. (Foss, S., 2009, pp. 21-29)

The idea of traditional rhetorical criticism is to analyse the method used by the speaker, by describing their personality, describing the audience and the adequacy of the speech to it, formulating and organizing the main ideas, analysing the evidence provided by the speaker, the manner and style of expression, the testimonies of the public or the recordings that can provide further evidence in this regard. In its traditional conception, it must appeal to ethos, pathos, and logos as the main standards of analysis.

Based on the Neo-Aristotelian structure, Sonja Foss (2009, pp 24-28) describes the three stages in the actual analysis of a speech: the reconstitution of the context, the application of the 5 dogmas and impact assessment.

Rebuilding the context helps the critic better understand the speaker, the occasion and the audience. At this stage, information is gathered on the formative influences that have determined the speaker's principles and motivations; information about the speaker's experience on the subject; identifying the speaker's motivation.

Gathering information about the present or targeted audience helps the critic understand why the speaker has chosen certain strategies to achieve their goal, identify the speaker's reputation while also taking into account the public's knowledge of the speech topic.

The second stage concerns the application of canons, since the critic must meet the requirements of the five dogmas: invention, disposition, style, utterance and memory; they may summarise their analysis only on invention and/or disposition.

The first dogma, invention, refers to the critic finding the ideas, arguments and fundamental content of the speaker. Therefore, they can use the two major types of evidence: external evidence, also called non-artistic/non-technical evidence, such as witnesses and various documents and respectively, internal evidence, also called rhetorical

evidence/artistic/technical evidence, which is used by specialists and which incorporates ethos, pathos and logos.

In the case of logos, we can identify two types of reasoning that need to be analysed: inductive reasoning, in which one departs from a particular case to arrive at a general conclusion, and deductive reasoning, in which a general statement implies a particular statement.

The second dogma, disposition, refers to the way ideas are structured and organized in the speech. One can identify the idea that dominates the speech, why it is placed where it is, and the repeated ideas. The purpose of the critic is to determine whether the structure of the speech is consistent with the subject and its purpose, as well as whether it is appropriate for the public. Moreover, the critic must identify the general method of organization. The main types of organization are as follows: chronological order, problem-solution order, problem-cause-solution order, comparative advantages order, and sequential-motivating order/motivating scheme for the organization of persuasive messages, which has five parts – attention, necessity, satisfaction, visualization and action.

The third canon, style, has to do with the language used by the speaker, i.e. the use of certain words or symbols to create various rhetorical effects, and with an analysis of the general effects: common, robust or ornate.

In the fourth dogma, uttering or delivering the speech, the critic identifies the presentation mode (spontaneous/read); body language and vocal skills.

Memory, the last rhetorical canon, is not mainly used in the neo-Aristotelian analysis, because most contemporary discourses are rendered by reading. Even so, the critic can identify the relationship between memory and presentation.

The third and final stage, impact assessment, lies in drawing a general conclusion about the speech. The critic has to determine the effect of the

speech, or, in other words, whether it has succeeded in achieving its intended purpose or not.

“The interview is a social situation of conversational exchange between two persons to gather information within a specified framework.” (Weil-Barais, A., 1997, p. 99). The primary purpose of the interview was to find out to what extent people consider ethos relevant as a characteristic of a leader and to what extent they let themselves be led by it when they decide whether to follow a person or his/her example, or not.

Similar questions can be found in the interview, just to check consistency in answers and to discover new information that may arise due to different wording. The questions asked in the interview are specific and focus on the subject. They are also concise and do not suggest an answer, precisely so as not to influence the interviewee.

Given the nature of the interview, which is grounded in a desire for knowledge, we can say that information is the crucial element in this equation. Thus, for the accuracy of the results, I interviewed subjects having different backgrounds.

The number of questions is small, given the desire not to deviate from the subject, but at the same time, the questions give freedom of expression to the interviewee. Even though I started from the assumption that ethos is important to all of us when evaluating any person we meet, I wanted to find out how important it is to the interviewees.

I tried to identify all the links between ethos and the natural need to follow and empathize with someone characterized by this particular quality. I also figured out what made the interviewees attracted to this attribute or not. Motivation is as important as validating the assumption itself.

Similar words, positive or negative reactions, responses leading to a similar conclusion were also evaluated in parallel. The identity of the

interviewees remained anonymous so that they could express themselves freely.

3. Results

In my dissertation paper, I used discourse analysis to compare a general and a political leader. The reason I chose this fine analogy between political and business leaders is that I do not believe that there is a distinction in this regard.

Hence, based on the analysis of some of Nelson Mandela's and Donald Trump's speeches, it can be concluded that ethos is very important when we want to gain the trust of the majority. Of course, as I mentioned in the course of the analyses, it is not the only element a leader, be they political or business, should take into account. A complete leader, a leader in the truest sense, should harmoniously frame everything that means ethos, pathos and logos, and give the proper importance to each, in various contexts.

We can easily see the differences between the two protagonists. While Nelson Mandela builds his speech based on the principles he truly believes in, Donald Trump builds his speech on simple but powerful words to create the illusion that he has a valid point of view, even when he supports racist/sexist practices. This characteristic of Trump is representative throughout his entire career as a businessman. Even so, contrary to general opinion, I believe that he can be seen as an intelligent man, to some extent, precisely because of his ability to be as good as a spin doctor, presenting his ideas as being as ethical and as well-intended as can be.

Thus, the greatest difference between the two lies in ethics, honour and good intentions. The fact that Donald Trump won the elections does not necessarily illustrate the fact that he managed to win the trust of the majority. It rather shows that the \$5 million invested in Cambridge Analytica to analyse the data, in September only, was well spent.

If we analyse the results of the interviews, we can see that an overwhelming majority, i.e. seven out of eight respondents, would rather choose Nelson Mandela over Donald Trump, while only one respondent prefers Donald Trump, in virtue of the drastic measures he dared to establish.

If we focus on what the majority asserts, we can notice that Nelson Mandela is appreciated precisely for what Donald Trump lacks, i.e. for his ethics, for the “stubbornness” specific to his fight against racial segregation, for equal rights regardless of the underlying human aspect.

Five out of eight respondents claim that ethos is the most important feature in a leader, while three believe that logos comes first. Even so, we can see that two out of the three respondents who support this lean towards ethos in subsequent questions.

When it comes to performance at work and the attitude of the boss, opinions are divided equally. Some respondents claim that their work would be affected by their boss’s attitude, while some believe that this would not represent an issue. Even so, the latter answer comes in all cases with an addition or a condition: “the boss should be professional/should have common sense”, “the respondent should find joy in his work/should do what he likes”.

For out of eight respondents claim that if they were given the opportunity to be leaders, they would be ethical leaders. However, in this category we can also include the majority of respondents, who, even if they did not use the term “ethical”, used terms that revolve around this concept, such as “balanced”, “fair” and “transparent”. Furthermore, the majority claims that they would choose to be informed leaders, using attributes that revolve around this term, such as “logical”, “calculated”, “rational” and “professional/performance excellence”. These answers emphasize the idea that ethos and logos go hand in hand when it comes to an ideal leader.

The majority of respondents would be willing to change their beliefs if evidence and arguments were presented to them, instead of suggested hypotheses. Nevertheless, experts in the field are the primary choice in the process of forming an opinion.

In light of both the content analysis and the answers provided by the interviewees, I can strongly affirm that ethos is an indispensable attribute in leaders, an attribute without which Nelson Mandela would have been just another ordinary name, not a name that made history and still serves as an example, even after his death. Without ethos, therefore, we cannot speak of leaders, but only of managers, organizers and bosses.

Conclusions

The fact that my study draws on a previously defined theoretical framework does not mean that I have eliminated the novelty factor. This study was launched on certain premises that I wanted to demonstrate and emphasise in my case studies by means of both discourse analysis and the interview. I cannot possibly imagine this study will be used as a cornerstone in business and beyond. This study can, however, be taken into consideration in any company, any business. It is not an unknown situation that people are more or less similar in certain aspects. Even diversity itself is a conglomeration of similarities. It is well-known that information is power, but I believe that we are still in the incipient phase in terms of ethical practices and conferring importance to it when it comes to manager or leaders, even if progress has been made in recent years in this branch. It is also noteworthy that the interviewees value both ethos and logos, to more or less the same extent. An employer, someone who runs a team or a group of people, should, therefore, in the first place, ask themselves what they hope to get from those people. If the answer, among other things, is respect, admiration, to be a role model, to enjoy maximum performance, to be able to work as a team, to solve problems in the most effective way, then they

should consider this study, or any other similar study in the field, which emphasizes the importance of a criterion that has not been particularly prominent in the past.

I must admit that it is a concise study that aims to highlight certain configurations, certain aspects, more or less known. Its limits are obvious when it comes to novelty, given the large number of previous studies on the same topic. However, I have not been able to identify any other work focusing on the antithesis between Nelson Mandela and Donald Trump. As for the interview part, the guide was created entirely by me.

For better understanding, I would recommend an experiment carried out by companies based on the information provided in this article.

It is said that employees are perhaps the most important part of stakeholders because they are the most viable source of information that inevitably makes contact with the outside world. In other words, an employee who is satisfied at work represents an employee who adds value to the company's brand. By analogy, an employee will recommend the company they work for and will bring a favourable reputation only if they are satisfied with what they are experiencing at work.

I am not sure if the theoretical (not empirical) studies in this direction are redundant or vital to establishing certain irrefutable bases in business practices and beyond. On the one hand, I am convinced that all studies in this regard are sufficient to demonstrate the effectiveness and need of ethos, but on the other hand, I feel that this way of thinking is not shared by everyone. This can only highlight the fact that this should not represent an end, but just a means to an end.

Paradoxically, I consider this work to be a meaningful one, but at the same time, just another work that succeeded (I would dare say) in demonstrating something that is already known; the assimilation of new opinions is never in vain, the practical meaning finally sealing some utopian

concepts, which on the surface are defined by fairness, ethics, and perseverance. In a word: ethos.

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Interview guide

1. When you choose to follow a leader, which of the three specific characteristics matters most in this endeavor (ethos – ethical argumentation, pathos – emotional argumentation, logos – logical argumentation > ethos – credibility: intelligence, virtuous character, goodwill; pathos – emotions, feelings, affects; logos – inductive examples, deductive reasoning)? There are ten points that you need to distribute according to the importance each characteristic has in your opinion.

2. Have you heard of Nelson Mandela? If so, what do you know about him?

3. Have you heard of Donald Trump? If so, what do you know about him?

4. Regarding questions 2 and 3, please choose one of the above-mentioned leaders you would follow and mention three representative features that made you choose him.

5. Do you think that your work is influenced by your boss's attitude? If so, can you mention the features that should define a boss so that you work to your full potential?

6. If you were a leader who has influence over many people, what characteristics would you focus on? What kind of leader would you be? (e.g. an ethical leader, a fair leader, an informed leader, an emotional leader, etc.)

7. In your opinion, what could a leader do to gain credibility? What criteria should they meet? (e.g. virtuousness, righteousness, intelligence, emotion, being informed, etc.)

8. Regarding the previous question, once a leader has managed to become credible, what could make them strengthen that credibility? (e.g. maintaining the same practices, developing other features, improving what they have already built, etc.)

9. Which characteristics of a leader would make you give up on your own beliefs and follow theirs? (e.g. virtuousness, righteousness, intelligence, emotion, empathy, being informed, etc.)

10. Do you think you become more susceptible when someone you trust tries to convince you of something? Please motivate your answer.

11. If you don't have a clear opinion on something, who would you listen to and follow? (e.g. an expert's opinion, a friend's opinion, a journalist's opinion, media's opinion, etc.)

12. In the decision-making process, do you settle for information coming from a single source to form an opinion or would you rather listen to both pros and cons from various sources? Please motivate your answer and, in case you prefer to consult multiple sources, please mention some of them in order of importance.