



Permission and Leadership

-Mark Haeussler, CEO

Much of consumer branding is about granting permission to your customers. When we exchange resources, we have to let go of one resource to get another, usually time or money. Consumers like to know that they have permission.



Let's use a consumer product of beer as an example. There are any number of analyses of beer commercials, and, for this article, I rely on work done by Michelle Matter of Ripon College. Ms. Matter would conclude that beer companies seek to grant permission of consumers to be manly, sociable, and self-rewarding. Consider that last one – rewarding: Beer companies seek to grant permission to reward oneself or those around us. Perhaps they conclude that people might be reticent to self-reward. For a chocolate making company, it might be permission to be indulgent. A loan may grant the permission to buy something now, rather than later. It's not the car, it's having the car now. Sophisticated marketers understand all of this.

In your leadership, what *permission do you seek to create in those around you?* What do you suppose that people would say to others about how authorized they are to make decisions and take actions? The word *author* comes from the Old French, and means originator, creator, or instigator. Thus, the term *authority*, to author, requires permission, whether self-granted or granted by others. As with selling a product, a leader needs to consider how they communicate permission to others – how leaders *authorize* others to become authors of their actions. How might you take away authority by the way you lead and communicate? Do you seek to have a large self-authority, where you keep permission close? Do you tell people that they have permission, but your actions communicate otherwise?

Like the consumer product metaphor, what two to three things are you seeking to convince those you lead that they can have self-authorship? What language are you using, and how does it support authority? What leadership presence do you cultivate, and how well does that align with the granting of authority? What happens when someone you lead encounters a breakdown, and how do you ensure that the permission remains intact while managing the shortcoming? Consider that every moment of your leadership is a commercial, advertising to others some message: What do you want it to say? What might others perceive you are saying? How do you know your permissions align with your leadership brand?

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