



# OPPRESSIVE

## Chapter 7

### **Large and In Charge**

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Sent: Monday, March 16 at 5:47 pm  
From: CEO's Desk  
To: Executive Team  
Subject: Investment Banker Presentation on Tues.

Team,

The folks from Gold Tower Investments will be here on Tuesday as part of their vetting process is to meet with all of you, get to know you better individually, and get a real sense of the strength and valuable contribution that each of you bring to our great company. Please be early and bring your best! Also, seating and presentation is important in this meeting, so I'll be seated at the head of the conference table. Jim, Dave, and Bill, I'd like you on my left representing business and finance. Ladies, if you would please sit together on my right representing HR and marketing. All of you, dress for success. Ladies, NO pantsuits!

I'll assume that we all agree I'll answer ALL the questions, unless I specifically ask you something or turn in your direction. You need to be prepared for any and all questions when and if I call on you to answer on your own behalf. Please stay bright-eyed and attentive as they're expecting you to be the A team!

See you all then, and best of luck to you!

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Body language and physical presentation are critical to great leadership, not only when presenting to others but also in your day-to-day encounters with your staff to ensure that you are at all times positioned in a way that reinforces your authority. Let's start with body language. There are two easy words to keep top of mind: height and proximity. Studies in business books have shown that tall people emanate power and are especially fortunate to have that natural intimidation factor working in their favor. For those less fortunate (which is anyone under 5' 9" in the United States) you will have to find ways to appear taller. For women, this means the highest heels that you can stay balanced in. Since anything under a 3" heel tends to look dowdy and age you, shoot for 3.5" and higher. Four inches is the optimal heel height to both increase your height and say, "I'm in charge and can get nasty when I need to" at the same. For men who fall short (pun intended!) of optimum power height, there's an old adage: "When you can't go high, go wide!" So hit the gym, bulk up, and make sure that your upper arms and shoulders are as wide and muscular as possible. This will say to everyone in the room, "I may be short, but I'll kick your ass to get my way, and I'm so awesome that I have lots of free time to spend in the gym." Also shoe lifts can work, but make sure it isn't obvious that you're wearing them. And for God's sake, if you have small hands, keep them under the table. No sense in advertising that! Women, if you have a decent rack, let it show! It will keep the focus on your boobs and you're more likely to get what you want. You might as well use all your assets!

Once you have reached the optimum stature, you'll want to work on your proximity to others. Remember that a sure-fire way to state your position is to invade your subordinates' personal space. After all, they are your employees: you gave them the space they are occupying, so it's yours to claim as you see fit. When visiting a team member's office, stand or loom over them. If you need to sit, perch on their desk near their chair so as to say, "Look only at me, and listen only to me." Planting yourself directly on top of their working files is also a way to subliminally let them know what you think of their most recent SWOT analysis or competitive review. This will have them shaking in their boots about that upcoming performance review! Your invasion of their personal space with all parts of your body can be oppressive, which is the point. Make your people feel your presence—make them feel small and scared.

In a group setting, this dynamic is even more critical. But since you are the leader and it's important that you arrive late to most group meetings (see Chapter 20: The Waiting Game), you may have to get creative to ensure that you have the most visible seat at the head of the table. Techniques for doing this include simply approaching the person sitting in your desired seat, looming over them, and saying nothing. This creates a healthy, natural tension that will cause them to offer you their seat at once. You can also announce that you'd like to rearrange the seating and move everyone to the seat you would like them to sit in. When meeting with investors, bankers, strategic partners, etc., make absolutely certain that you seat the most attractive team members nearest your guests (second to you, of course), but whatever you do, don't let them speak.

Over time, you will learn the other subtleties of body language for leadership: waving your arms, slamming your palm on your desk, rolling your eyes, giving squinty stares, and

making long, breathy sighs. Every body movement, or lack thereof, is powerful! These are all techniques to get your point across without wasting your words. Remember: intimidating silence is golden!

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## Let's Get Real

Leaders are often the last to fully realize how their body language and interpersonal behavior is interpreted by others and how it can create an unspoken barrier between them and their colleagues. Frequently your body language is the first thing to make you appear inaccessible, dominating, or intimidating. So remember: make meaningful eye contact when you're listening, never stand over anyone, respect others' personal space, and let people speak for themselves.

Great leadership means putting others before your self and giving them the space they need to grow. Being aware of your own physical presence, your hand gestures, and your proximity to others is respectful and necessary. All of these unspoken cues will cause others to feel either intimidated or welcomed and encouraged. Be mindful of your space and how much oxygen you are giving or taking in any given setting. Others are watching closely.

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## (How Not to) Be a Leader

by Mary E. Marshall & Kim Obbink

*(How NOT to) Be a Leader* is the first in a series of how-not-to guides for newly minted leaders looking to avoid becoming feared or hated losers in the ivory tower or veteran leaders looking in the rearview mirror wondering where and why they ran off the road. Irreverent and hilarious, *(How NOT to) Be a Leader* shines a big bright spotlight on the oh-so-common mistakes that many leaders make when they plow forward through life and business without taking the time to really consider the effect their leadership is having on others. We've all seen and heard the horror stories of bad leadership, and hopefully many of us have been lucky enough to have been the benefactor of truly great leadership. Either way, if it's your turn at the top, *(How NOT to) Be a Leader* will help you understand what you can do to be a better leader by first understanding what you should never ever do; and if you are, why you should back up the truck, take another look at yourself and your leadership qualities, and do the work and self-reflection needed to get back on track.

Why this book series? Having been in the leadership trenches for a combined fifty years, we've seen a lot. Some good, some bad, and some really, really horrible. There was no guide for us, and we want to help all those leaders who will come after us. Not with a boring manifesto about a fictional leader who only exists in a book, but with real-life stories we've experienced or even perpetrated ourselves and vow never to repeat.

This book consists of twenty-four characteristics that you don't want to be known for. Not all twenty-four will apply to you and a few might resonate louder than others. What was it you heard in your last 360? Micromanaging doesn't work? You aren't listening? You want everyone to do it your way? You might have a few to work on, and our challenge to you is to choose three or four that seem the most immediate and start working on those. Once you've mastered them, take on a few more. And certainly share the book with those around you whose leadership styles need a little polish.

Should you accept this leadership challenge, you will be able to quickly identify twenty-four ineffective leadership traits and make changes to positively address them. Through the stories in this book, you will learn how to avoid the pitfalls of leadership, how to be a better leader, and, most importantly, how to pass good leadership on to those you lead.

*Available now from [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com) in print and Kindle formats.*

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[www.mary-marshall.com](http://www.mary-marshall.com)