

## Brand You: You Are Your Story

When in doubt, if you do what I do, call on Gandhi. One of my favorite Gandhi quotes is: “My life is my message.” The number one thing for a leader—and the leader can be a 26-year-old who doesn’t have a leadership job, because you’re attracting followers as much at 23 or 24 or 25 or 26 in a McDonald’s or in the White House as you are at 36 or 46 or 56—the way you live, every little vibe that you give off, is critically important.

Howard Gardner, the great Harvard leadership expert, said, “One’s life, one’s story, is fundamentally the single most effective tool that any leader at any level has.” And so, I want to say, “My life is my message and my story is my message.”

If you notice, particularly when you look at presidents, kings, and prime ministers, their speeches tend to be peppered with 10-second stories, 15-second stories. Their speeches are almost never (except below the surface) analytic. They are stories stitched together that end up giving off some vibes.

Now, you’re not president or prime minister, and 25 or 30 years ago I lived in the Mecca of analytic behavior, McKinsey & Company. But when we would make a presentation to the CEO of a part of GE, in an engineering business, let alone a retailer, we would also include quotes from people that we had talked to, and those quotes were essentially micro-stories. So, pay attention to storytelling. Maybe you ought to go in your off-time and watch one of the great storytellers. But people who make a difference have good stories, put good stories together.

Ghandi: “My life is my message.”