

[youtube:<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AjqKiLQ771M>]All great leaders make the same speech. Look at all the most powerful speeches that the greatest leaders in the world have ever made – they could have been written by the same speech-writer. They all point directly to a better future. Leaders of corporations today have a huge amount to learn from the emotional appeal of these giants of recent history, while also recognising that running a business often requires a radically different style.

Here are the sort of phrases that great leaders use (great in the sense of being able to persuade large numbers to follow):

“That this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom -- and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.” **Abraham Lincoln**

"And when that victory is gained you will find you are in a better world: a world which can be made even more fair, more happy, if only all the peoples will join together to do their part and if all classes of parties stand together to reap the fruits of victory as they are standing together to bear the terrors and menaces of war." **Winston Churchill**

“I would just like to remember some words of St. Francis of Assisi which I think are really just particularly apt at the moment. ‘Where there is discord, may we bring harmony. Where there is error, may we bring truth. Where there is doubt, may we bring faith. And where there is despair, may we bring hope’ and to all the British people—howsoever they voted—may I say this. Now that the Election is over, may we get together and strive to serve and strengthen the country of which we're so proud to be a part.” **Margaret Thatcher**

“Changing Britain for better. For good. Not a society where all succeed equally - that is utopia; but an opportunity society where all have an equal chance to succeed; that could and should be 21st century Britain under a Labour Government. Where nothing in your background, whether you're black or white, a man or a woman, able-bodied or disabled, stands in the way of what your merit and hard work can achieve.” **Tony Blair**

“For our country to succeed requires the combined efforts of all of us, in all walks of life. Our achievements so far have shown what can be done when we set aside petty differences and together pursue the common good. **Nelson Mandela**

“Together let us work with other nations for peace and happiness across our continent and our globe. “ **Nelson Mandela**

“By working together we can build the country of our dreams.” **Nelson Mandela**

“America, the richest and most powerful nation in the world, can well lead the way in this revolution of values” **Martin Luther King**

“Lift your eyes beyond the dangers of today, to the hopes of tomorrow, beyond the freedom

merely of this city, or your country, to the advance of freedom everywhere, to the day of peace with justice, beyond yourselves and ourselves to all mankind.” **John F. Kennedy**

“We are here today to raise the flag of victory over the capital of our greatest adversary.... We’re raising it in the name of the people of the United States who are looking forward to a better world, a peaceful world, a world in which all the people will have an opportunity to enjoy the good things in life and not just a few at the top. Let us not forget that we are fighting for peace and for the welfare of mankind. We want peace and prosperity for the world as a whole. – **Harry Truman: Speech in American sector of Berlin. 1945.**

“I offer you peace. I offer you love. I offer you friendship. I see your beauty. I hear your need. I feel your feelings. My wisdom flows from the Highest Source. I salute that Source in you. Let us work together for unity and love.” **Mahatma Gandhi**

If you want to bring the whole thrust of their leadership into a couple of sentences it would be this:

“Follow me. Together I believe that we can build a better kind of world:

For you, For your family, For the people you care about.
For your community, your city and our great nation
For the whole of humanity....”

And they (almost always) add for good measure:

“In God we trust”

And (depending on the country) end with:

“God bless America or wherever!”

That’s the speech. It’s the simplest, greatest, noblest, purest, most powerful speech a leader can ever make.

It takes the moral high ground yet is as self-satisfying as you can get.

Such an appeal works at every level. We are swept along by our own self-interest, and by our concern for loved ones, our loyalty to our neighbours and friends, our common heritage and common values, by a sense of higher purpose, a sense of community and national identity, and beyond it all, by a call to identify with the good of all, wherever they may be and whoever they are.

Confidence in politicians and business leaders has sunk low, and we may at times be cynical about real motives and integrity, but the language they use is similar.

There are many theories and styles of leadership ranging from visionary, strategist,

commander, story-teller, systems architect, change agent and servant. But whatever method or style you adopt, history shows that Building a Better World is central to success.

Just imagine a different kind of speech:

“Follow me and I will satisfy your every personal need, give you loads of money, social status, faster cars, impressive job titles and the opportunity to learn new skills in challenging jobs that could lead to greater things”.

It hardly grabs you by the throat. Hardly a speech to engage the passions of a thousand people, let alone a city or an entire nation.

Why not?

Because powerful speeches always appeal to all the passions of the heart: not just to Self, but to family concerns, community spirit and concerns for the future of our wider world.

Powerful speeches always touch a higher moral principle such as justice, liberty, relief of suffering or freedom.

“Sustainability - creating a better world for the future through our actions and decisions today - is at the heart of what we do at Bristol-Myers Squibb. We define it by the actions we take, the values we uphold and the goals we set.” Peter R. Dolan Chairman and Chief Executive Officer Bristol Myers-Squibb, on the vision he has for the pharmaceutical and health care business

"Creating socially responsible corporations that help to make a better world is the auto industry's most important job in the 21st century." Ford Motor Company Chairman, William Clay Ford, Jr

Speeches that appeal to high moral instincts and noble principles have been used to unleash powerful forces for both good and evil. The worst dictators that have ever lived have always used the same speech, because it is the only one that works for them too. But the promise is always of a better world in a broad sense – for you, your family, neighbours, villages, communities, cities, our entire nation and for the whole of humanity. The more evil the nature of the regime, the stronger the apparent call to higher values, and the more the speech appeals to a broad vision of the future, because no other call is so effective at moving the heart of a nation, or a tribe or a group of people.

Always? There are some rare exceptions:

“Follow me and together we will wipe out all the other people and grab everything for ourselves” – better world for us and our families and our own communities but to hell with the rest

Such a speech does sometimes work – so long as you are only speaking to criminals, psychopaths or a people group that has become dehumanised as a result (usually) of a terrible history of violence, atrocities, oppression, fear and insecurity. It works during armed conflicts at

a local level - killings tend eventually to brutalise those on both sides - but it never works for long when nation-building in times of peace.

Recent terrorist groups also use the same Building a Better World speech to encourage suicide bombers: appealing to the individual (spiritual reward and honour if killed), family (honour and financial / community support), community (protection of “our” people and promotion of the cause) and wider humanity (help usher in a new world order).

Strange then, having seen how many good and evil regimes have successfully launched off the back of the same speech, that such large numbers of corporate leaders spend so much time and energy banging on the drum of naked-self interest and personal advancement in order to generate the maximum commitment to the corporate cause. They may be good leaders – but they will never achieve greatness, nor the deeper respect of their workforce, their community, their country or indeed of the wider world.

Adapted from [Building a Better Business](#) - book by Patrick Dixon, keynote conference speaker on leadership, management, motivation and related issues, for many of the world's largest multinationals.