

Leading with **GRACE**

a fresh approach to gravitas at work

Praesta is an international partnership of business coaches. We support senior leaders, including CEOs, main board directors, leadership team members, other key senior executives and emerging leaders through Executive Coaching, Team Coaching and Board Performance Reviews. We are leaders in working with executive women and job-sharers.

All Praesta coaches have had senior level careers in business or government and combine this deep experience with rigorous professional coaching practice and professional development.

Three core values are fundamental to everything we do:

Insightful

Broadening perspective, fostering creativity and finding clarity

Excelling

Igniting client confidence to excel now and into the future

Uplifting

Enabling those we work with to be confident, authentic and encouraged in their leadership

Praesta Insights draw together ideas and experience on topical leadership issues in an accessible and digestible way.

Praesta coaches Pete Freeman and Una O'Brien are the joint authors of 'Leading with Grace: a fresh perspective on gravitas at work'.

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Leading with GRACE: a fresh approach to gravitas at work

Introduction

This insight document outlines a practical framework for anyone who aspires to improve their leadership and impact at work. It will be valuable for individuals across a wide range of organisations who want to take on greater responsibility. And, for anyone who wants to talk about gravitas as an aspect of leadership, say in an appraisal or when recruiting a new colleague, this framework will help in enabling you to have a more precise and tailored discussion.

The term gravitas is used admiringly about distinctive aspects of many highly regarded leaders and can come up at work in conversations about leadership development and senior level recruitment. Gravitas is something we can perceive in others, a combination of behaviours that lead us to infer the person in front of us is responsible, serious in their intent and has the capability to make good decisions. It's never about relying on presentation or appearances alone.

People with gravitas are anchored in a deeper purpose, they hold our attention, they listen to us, are emotionally intelligent and can 'read the room'. They know to their core who they are. We respect their integrity

and authenticity even when we might take a different perspective.

The behaviours associated with gravitas are sought after by people wanting to be better leaders and those aspiring to more senior positions. Yet the word itself, 'gravitas', can meet a mixed reception carrying, in some contexts, an uncomfortable feel of older, white male authority or of an outmoded style of management.

These differing interpretations of gravitas are the inspiration for this Praesta Insight. Drawing widely on our experience as coaches, working with aspiring and established leaders across the private, public and third sectors, we have taken the best of gravitas and placed it in a modern, future-focused framework: Leading with GRACE.

Based on many hundreds of hours of conversation and our own research, the GRACE framework is designed to make gravitas accessible and relevant to a wide and diverse range of 21st century leaders. The behaviours and mindsets associated with gravitas cannot be faked, that's to say it's not just about what's visible on the outside. The journey requires a focus on our internal world as well as on our external, visible impact.



Leading with GRACE

The GRACE framework, in making transparent the positive behaviours underlying gravitas, offers an invitation for you to integrate gravitas into your personal leadership style.

As coaches, we each work with clients who ask for support explicitly to improve their gravitas. For some, their search is shorthand for ‘I want to be better and more effective in handling challenges at work’. Others are clear that for them, it’s all about greater influence in decision making and leading others through difficult situations. We also work with clients applying for a new job where recruiters are looking for evidence of gravitas. There is a clear sense across all sectors that developing or being perceived as having gravitas is associated with enhanced responsibility and progression to senior leadership and board roles.

Sometimes clients have had feedback, perhaps from a line manager or a senior colleague about the ‘need to improve their gravitas’ or that a ‘lack of gravitas’ is what’s holding them back. This can be unsettling. All too often such feedback is given without further explanation, leaving people uncertain about what is really meant and confused about their next steps. We think much greater clarity is needed around the use of the term ‘gravitas’ in personal and professional development as it should never be used, however unintentionally, to exclude people or hold them back.

In our practice we find that de-constructing gravitas into five core capabilities, which together comprise the GRACE framework, helps make gravitas more transparent, widely accessible and relevant to current and future leaders. We believe it is possible to reclaim gravitas as an entirely positive trait.

Five interconnected elements make up the Leading with GRACE framework:

- **Guiding Purpose**
- **Responsiveness**
- **Authenticity**
- **Communication**
- **Expertise**

The following pages touch on the meaning and importance of each of the elements. Throughout, we include quotes from coaching clients.


While the elements are separated here for clarity and focus, in the real world they are profoundly interconnected and mutually reinforcing. Focusing on any single element within GRACE could be helpful, more useful may be to consider the elements in combination, each contributing to build the positive behaviours of a more modern approach to gravitas.

Like wisdom, gravitas is one of those things you can't really claim yourself to have, yet it is within our gift to work on the things that mean others will perceive it in us.

To support the focus on our "inner game," each section contains questions for reflection and suggested actions. These are intended to offer possible next steps in the journey towards gravitas. Such topics are hard to work on alone; it may be worth seeking out a trusted colleague or coach to discuss and exchange insights. Many clients find that keeping a learning or reflective journal can help.

We conclude with a short checklist which might be considered a quick snapshot to help review your current strengths and development needs within each of the elements and a one-page summary of the GRACE framework.





“The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others.”

– Mahatma Gandhi

G - Guiding Purpose

A **guiding purpose** is about finding a personal sense of meaning, helping us to feel that what we do is fulfilling and worthwhile. We can develop and re-appraise a guiding purpose during any phase of our lives and it becomes part of how we have an impact, whether at home, with friends or at work.

When a guiding purpose gives us clarity, influencing what we say and how we act, this resonates beyond the surface wisdom of our words alone; it enables us to reach deeper, connecting directly to our own and others' values, beliefs and emotions.

Why does having a guiding purpose matter?

We've come to expect businesses and organisations to have a mission statement and clearly stated values, revealing something of what the organisation stands for. Yet how often do we spend time on our own mission statement, on uncovering our guiding purpose?

Whether it relates to something you care about deeply, maybe your core values, or perhaps something

you want to achieve at this stage in your life, taking time to explore your personal guiding purpose can enhance the meaning and enjoyment of work as well as day-to-day living.

“I've always had a really positive attitude and I've taken a sense of pride in being able to find a way to enjoy more or less anything. When my coach started asking about what motivates and drives me, I really struggled. Everything did! Eventually I realised it was always something to do with developing others that got me really excited. Now I know this, it's central to my entire leadership agenda.”

From our experience as coaches, we've seen that people who develop and keep hold of their guiding purpose find that it:

- connects their actions more consistently to the impact they want to achieve
- strengthens their resilience

- deepens a sense of confidence
- helps make work feel more rewarding
- connects actions to the people we serve

A guiding purpose is like your personal ‘north star’, the place you can look towards to ‘steer the ship in a storm’; it’s how to bring more meaning to what you do so that others can sense and see what truly matters. Being guided by an overarching purpose quietens the potentially harmful influence of ego on our thinking. It’s not about us, it’s about the outcomes we can achieve for others. Some real-life examples follow below, all of which speak to making the world a better place rather than personal gain alone:

“to stand up for those who aren’t able to defend themselves”

“to radiate positivity and to energise and inspire everyone I come in to contact with”

“to make others laugh, so that we all feel a little better about ourselves”

“to be an educator and help students be the very best version of themselves, unintimidated by life”

Some, particularly those with vocational careers, can reach a quick and clear definition of their guiding purpose, however most of us will need time to reflect and possibly talk it through, refining our guiding purpose over time.

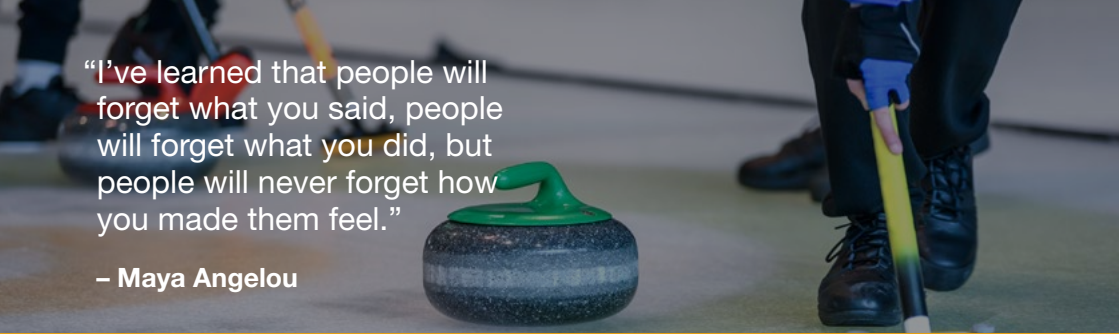
“For a long time I felt too busy helping others achieve their objectives to even think about my own. Then a colleague gave me a simple tip. She told me not to log on as the first thing I do in the morning. Instead spend 5-10 minutes pre-email and pre-other people’s agendas, thinking about my purpose and objectives and then committing to just one action towards these each day. Such a simple idea, but it’s transformed what I get done.”

Questions for Reflection

- When you visualise the impact of your work on your customers or end users and wider society, how else would you like to make a difference?
- Imagine you are looking back on your working life from a significant birthday. What will you be most proud of? What might that tell you about what motivates and energises you and what you most care about?
- Is work as enjoyable as it used to be? What did you used to enjoy and why? How can you reconnect with this?

Suggested Actions

- Spend a moment at the start of the day considering your guiding purpose. This should be exciting and energising. Use this energy to commit to taking on one challenge, overcoming one barrier or getting one thing done during the day in service of your guiding purpose.
- Consider your organisation's values and purpose. Review how the elements resonate with your personal guiding purpose and help you feel engaged and motivated. Where there is little overlap, this can be a source of constant tension, which may need to be addressed.
- Share your guiding purpose with others in your team so they understand what is really important to you. Encourage them to consider and then share theirs too.



“I’ve learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.”

– Maya Angelou

R - Responsiveness

Getting back to people quickly might be the first thing that strikes us about **responsiveness**, but we mean much more than this when we consider the GRACE framework. It’s not the speed of reaction so much as the quality: responding to what’s going on around us in a considered way and acting intentionally are paramount. This contrasts with habitual reactions; they may be necessary in daily life, but don’t work so well when we’re faced with differing perspectives and complex situations. Taking control of our habitual responses gives us more options to deal with the situations we encounter and that’s why we think of responsiveness as the ability to take stock, to listen and to respond accordingly rather than ‘shooting from the hip’.

Being responsive means being prepared to change your mind if the facts demand it. Humility comes to the fore as taking the opportunity to grow and learn outranks any thoughts of protecting current views and our ego. Responsiveness is not about any one person winning the argument, on the contrary, it’s about collectively deriving the best outcomes together.

Why does improving responsiveness matter?

The days of top down, know it all management and leadership are vanishing. Across all sectors, today’s businesses and organisations increasingly need individuals and teams to excel at collaboration and working across professional disciplines and organisational boundaries. Responsiveness invites us to look at our working relationships and to improve the interpersonal skills we need to get the best from each other.

Responsiveness is also about looking outwards and to the future, engaging with the needs of customers, end users and the operational front line, as well as anticipating the impact of wider trends on the future our work.

A stock-take of responsiveness skills, however, starts with looking internally: calming the inner voice that rushes to say, ‘I’ve got the answer’ and making more space for the views of others. That’s the foundation for developing a more rounded response, one that brings people with you, building trust and credibility.

"I pay full attention to the speaker and the impact they are having on the rest of the room. I don't worry about what I'm going to say, I'm focused on making sure I understand exactly where everyone is coming from. I think this makes people feel as though they have been properly heard and I'd say this is a rarer feeling than it should be."

In our practice as coaches, we see that people with finely tuned responsiveness skills:

- Work to close the gap between impact intended and impact felt
- Can adapt their response according to the situation
- Pay attention to their own improvement
- Actively seek out a range of perspectives on any given problem
- Are approachable and receptive to disagreement

Responsiveness carries across different situations. Sometimes it might require the ability to inspire and energise. Other times it can demand the ability to calm a stressed team, leading by example with grace under pressure. It's an adaptive and dynamic capability, one that we can grow and refine with deliberate intention and attention.

Responsiveness ties in closely with guiding purpose. If you are searching for the best outcome rather than staying wed to your initial position, then being challenged is a positive thing, not a cause for frustration or anger. Humility can help with the emotional control needed to stay calm when our initial point of view is challenged and even overthrown.


"I used to take a real pride in the speed at which I could work. I was decisive and trusted my gut instincts. As I got promoted though, it became clear my team didn't feel listened to, and a couple of things went badly wrong because I'd just not thought them through. I realised I had to slow down and listen to others to help me look at problems from every angle. I still trust my instincts, but I'd like to think I now do so with a healthier dose of critical challenge."

Questions for Reflection

- How engaged are you with others as you speak with them? Why might different groups/individuals have a different experience of you?
- What are you noticing when 'reading the room' during a meeting; what cues suggest responsiveness and what cues indicate disengagement?
- When have you been a reassuring voice of calm able to slow things down to help yourself/others think more clearly?
- How do you respond to your views being challenged?
- Think of times where you have changed your mind; did you do so willingly or reluctantly?

Suggested Actions

- Choose some occasions when you have energised others and been inspiring; write down what you did that made the difference.
- Thinking about those times you've been a calm and reassuring presence, consider what may have been happening for you on the inside to make this possible.
- Take a moment to step back and observe others in the meetings you attend; notice how those who are effective in taking challenge and adapting their views handle their interactions.



“But above all, in order to be, never try to seem.”

– Albert Camus

A - Authenticity

Authenticity can be a problematic concept. It can be a justification for inflexibility and stubbornness: “I can’t change my views or my thinking because that’s just who I am”.

Equally the phrase “I’m just being authentic” is sometimes used as an excuse for blunt and thoughtlessly worded comments thrown out without much care for the impact on others.

It helps then to have a clear understanding of what authenticity is and is not. We define authenticity as behaving consistently with your values and your guiding purpose.

This definition invites us continually to learn and develop ourselves to better advance towards our guiding purpose. There is nothing static here that would allow us to be closed to new ideas and new thinking. Nor would it be acceptable to offend others in the name of authenticity. Heightening our awareness of the values, motivations and feelings of others enhances our chances of collaborating effectively.

Although we may want to learn from and model the behaviours we admire

in others, simply trying to copy those we hold in high regard would be unwise. Authentic self-development requires us to tease out the traits, behaviours and mindsets we admire and find ways to incorporate them into who we are.

Authenticity then is at the beating heart of gravitas. All other elements of the GRACE model: guiding purpose, responsiveness, communication and expertise have more impact when a person is authentic and each element in turn helps reinforce our inner authenticity and authentic behaviour.

Why does being authentic matter?

Being able to express our authentic selves matters because, quite simply, suppressing part of who we really are, or pretending to be something we’re not, is stressful, makes us unhappy and can take a toll on our mental health.

People with true authenticity are changing, learning and growing; their growth driven by the pursuit of a guiding purpose rather than any

intention to be a certain way. They do not try to hide their vulnerabilities or weaknesses; indeed, these might be the very things that stimulate ideas, new thinking and progress.

"In my early career I was way too worried about what others expected of me and how I was supposed to behave. I was so focused on fitting in, I almost faded into the background. It took getting passed over for a promotion to realise that I wasn't bringing my whole self to work. I started to relax a little and just be myself. The less attention I paid to doing the right thing, the more space I had to think about how to get things done. The results soon followed."

Belatedly many workplaces are shifting towards a more tolerant culture, where employees are supported and encouraged to be more open and confident about their unique identity.

While 'bring your whole self to work' is a welcome mantra, in practice it can be difficult and pose dilemmas. Some challenges we've heard include how to be open about opinions without inadvertently causing conflict and how to voice concerns in a constructive way that leads to improvement.

In our practice as coaches, we see that people who take care to behave authentically:

- are self-aware about their own and others' values, motivations and feelings able to assess their own strengths and weaknesses evenly, without either excessive ego or being too hard on themselves
- show courage in raising difficult issues and learning from mistakes, acting in tune with their values
- are warm and honest in their interactions with others, strengthening working relationships to achieve better outcomes
- focus on learning and personal development unhindered by the assumptions they are "right" or "the finished article"

"Whenever we'd have gatherings at work, people would comment about how much more chatty and sociable I was. I started to appreciate just how much of a work-mask I was wearing - trying to be serious and professional. I realised I could be both: professional but not formal, organised and efficient but not starchy and officious."

Questions for Reflection

- Consider how your friends and family would describe your strengths. What are the similarities and difference between this and how you are perceived at work?
- What dilemmas or uncertainties do you experience about being your authentic self at work?
- How could you be more intentional in being open and honest about your opinions at work, whilst remaining sensitive to the impact on others?

Suggested Actions

- Ask your closest friends “What one word or phrase describes me at my best and what do you believe to be my greatest strength?”
- Consider two or three people you encounter at work whom you perceive as authentic. Take note of what is it they do that makes you feel this way
- Plan to take a measured risk in being more open with your opinions at work, perhaps in a routine meeting or with your team



“The biggest communication problem is we do not listen to understand. We listen to reply.”

– Stephen R. Covey

C - Communication

As soon as we think of **communication**, we tend to imagine ourselves presenting to an audience. This is only a small part of the communication spectrum, and starting here can mean we spend too much time focusing on ourselves: “What will make me look smart?”, or “How can I look confident?”

Great communication goes beyond these fears because it is not about us. It’s about creating a conversation which deepens understanding and produces clearer thinking and better outcomes. Great communication is thus a mindset: a determined choice to advance in the service of your guiding purpose through collaboration.

Being an effective communicator starts not with speaking but with putting yourself in the shoes of those who are listening. Even the best of arguments can fall flat if, through words or behaviour, your listeners’ experience is overlooked.

In conversation, sometimes we may find that we’re listening for the opportunity to speak ourselves. Listening to the content of what’s

being said is better, but all too easily this can become listening for the weaknesses and gaps in someone’s logic so that we can win the argument. Deep listening is where we listen to understand the other person. Not just their line of thought, but their underlying values, motivators and purpose. It’s driven, not by a desire to win the interaction, but to co-create the best outcome.

Deep listening enables great communication; engaging fully with others through the way we listen, speak and write as well as via our body language. It helps us to be courageous, reading the right moment to speak whilst remaining sensitive to others, bringing them with you. Thinking clearly, phrasing what you want to say well and using concise language can then build on this base to improve impact, whether in a 1-1 situation, a meeting or wider setting.

Why communication matters more than ever

As the digital revolution accelerates in our workplaces and many roles become increasingly specialised,

good human-human communication skills matter more than ever. The ability to communicate effectively with others, in matrixed environments and across professional and organisational boundaries, adapting your style to different contexts is an increasingly valuable skill.

The sheer volume of incoming communications in today's workplace, multiple emails and back-to-back meetings, can be overwhelming. We can easily get drawn into 'transmit and transact' mode, a suboptimal place to be when dealing with complexity and the need to bring people with us.

"I remember the first ever 1:1 with my new boss. Everyone used to say she was a great leader, but she didn't seem to be that impressive at first glance. Then I had my first session with her. She asked me questions and she really listened. I left the room feeling fantastic. Listening really was her superpower."

From our experience as coaches, we notice that people who communicate well:

- pay attention to their communication impact in different contexts: 1-1, in groups and meetings, as well when giving set-piece presentations
- develop their ability to synthesise multiple messages

- are able to use metaphors and storytelling to engage others
- give priority to the quality and thoughtfulness of their content
- are synchronized in what they say and what they convey through their body language; authenticity (or lack of it) will show through.

When we listen to a good communicator it's highly engaging. They hold our attention and seem to be able to react to our need, slowing down at the right points to emphasise the key themes and taking us carefully step-by-step through the complex. The words chosen seem to speak to us on both an intellectual and emotional level. It's as if the speaker is talking directly to just us, regardless of whether we are together in a meeting room, on-line, or one of many in an audience.

Formal communication skills and media training do have value. Breathing techniques to prepare yourself for a presentation, harmonising tone and body language, mirroring and summarising what others are saying, these are all helpful skills to improve your impact. Style helps, but only if it built on substance.

A good communicator is an oasis of calm when the pressure is on and yet, when the moment requires it, they can be a lightning rod, mobilizing thought and action.

Questions for Reflection

- What steps could you take to listen more actively in meetings? What will be your trigger to remind yourself to do this?
- When have others described you as inspiring? What was it about you and what you did that inspired them?
- How would you communicate differently if you were guaranteed a supportive reception and didn't feel the need to impress anyone?

Suggested Actions

- Watch a selection of TED talks on interesting topics which you know little about. Study which presenters draw you in and how they do so
- Stand back in a meeting you regularly chair and ask one of your team to run the meeting. Watch who elicits positive responses around the table and analyse how you think they are able to do this
- Put a Post-It Note by your screen to help prompt you to slow down and notice the communication mode on a virtual call. Actively choose whether it is more useful to be in “collaborate” or “receive and transmit” mode
- Think about the impact you want to have ahead of an important meeting or presentation. Consider what you want to understand and how you want people to feel at the end of it



“True intuitive expertise is learned from prolonged experience with good feedback on mistakes”

– Daniel Kahneman

E - Expertise

Expertise is a combination of knowledge and skill applied to real world problems. We can develop it in a particular field or profession throughout our careers and deepen our capability over time. Experience and continuing professional development are crucial to expertise, but equally important are the humility we demonstrate in applying expertise at work and how openly we acknowledge our limits. In short, how do we behave with our expertise: do we use it as a weapon or an enabler?

Much of the story of expertise is about our individual journey: education, qualifications and career progression. Yet to be effective, our individual expertise needs to be combined with the knowledge and skills of others, including the input of people affected by our decisions.

By no means all experts can be said to have gravitas, but those who do have built their reputation either on their own expertise or being able skillfully to integrate the expertise of others. Either way, there is no gravitas unless expertise is at its heart. Being constantly curious and fascinated by different opinions and being

comfortable enough in one’s own skin to run towards what we don’t yet know is a clear mark of gravitas.

Why expertise matters

The pandemic of the 2020’s is a masterclass in the role of expertise. We looked to medical and scientific experts to explain the Covid-19 virus and to suggest a path forward. Yet leaders at every level have had to integrate this scientific expertise with other insights on the economy, human behaviour and healthcare capacity. Being decisive whilst remaining humble in the face of different types of evidence and uncertainty has been a defining leadership challenge for teams, projects and organisations everywhere.

Today’s organisations employ and contract with an increasingly wide range of functional specialists (e.g. finance, legal and communication professionals) and technical experts (e.g. within digital systems, data analysis and logistics). More and more, work is organised into projects and teams of people with wide and differing expertise. While a positive

development, as we have seen in our coaching practice, this can pose dilemmas for individuals. In our experience, those who are able to leverage their expertise to good effect in this environment:

- continually develop their expertise effectively at work, staying relevant without getting 'pigeon-holed'
- are receptive to the expertise of others, blending it with their own to form practical solutions and well as building expertise around the table
- are acutely aware that the value of their expertise relies on the trust others hold in them, so are careful not to over-reach or over-claim
- are graceful when the decision goes against them; complexity requires trade-offs and the balancing of different expertise and no-one wins every argument

"Early on in my career I could always rely on being the expert in the room. I'd read everything and was always the best prepared. I had a light bulb moment though watching my old CEO in action. He drew on all of the different experts in the room and wove the knowledge together. He knew less than I did, but he'd used the knowledge to improve his thinking. I realised I'd hoarded my expertise to gain respect. He was an expert at applying other people's expertise."

In an age when expertise is both revered and disparaged, it can be hard to know how best to express our own expertise in the company of others. Over-claim or over transmit and we soon lose trust and invite censure. Yet holding back, perhaps out of deference or uncertainty, can mean we miss our chance to influence a key decision.

How then to see expertise as part of the gravitas journey? Listen to others, ask questions and enquire about specific examples. It's not just about what you know but crucially what others know. And valuing different types of expertise, not just academic or professional, can be game changing: for example, the best healthcare takes account of patients' lived experience and their knowledge about their illness, combining those insights with research evidence and the skill and judgement of clinicians.

"My new boss was a candidate returning from an overseas posting. What struck me was how open she was about the gaps in her knowledge. She'd laugh at what she didn't know, but then she'd ask so many questions. By the end of every meeting, we would all have learnt something new."

Questions for Reflection

- When have you been fascinated by the counter view, exploring it to further your understanding? Where can you do this more?
- What might you be holding back? What more can you contribute to your project or organisation?
- What would it take for you to feel more at ease saying that you don't know or understand something? Is this equally true in all situations and with different groups?

Suggested Actions

- Where opinions differ, use your guiding purpose to find the common ground between your expertise and that of others. "Ladder up" from your differing positions until you find agreement
- Build 'frustration tolerance'. Actively work on being comfortable with small imperfections so as to be better able to experiment, learn from failures and grow your expertise
- Ensure expert debate through early information circulation so that team members can shape their views prior to a meeting. Then canvass everyone's views at the start of a meeting. This helps to avoid groupthink and shifts mindsets away from winning the argument towards getting the best outcomes

Final thought...

Our aim in highlighting the five elements of the GRACE framework has been to show that a firmer handshake, sharper clothing or a deeper voice alone should never be mistaken for gravitas. Rather, true gravitas developed through the GRACE framework invites a genuine focus on our internal world, in turn enabling greater collaboration with others, producing a more constructive impact on the world around us. It's open to everyone, at any stage of their career, to engage with this journey.

GRACE: The Five Elements of Gravitas

Guiding Purpose

Your thoughts and actions are clearly driven by your guiding purpose. You demonstrate humility making the most of your abilities by working with others, unconcerned with how clever you look and focused on sustainable progress towards your guiding purpose.

Responsiveness

You can remain calm with the self-control to retain grace under pressure. You are equally able to energise and inspire others to action. You are adaptable, both to the audience and to the moment, choosing how best to react, moving constructively towards your purpose.

Authenticity

You behave consistently with your values and your guiding purpose. You are driven by the need for self-development, continually learning and striving to better advance towards your goals. You are open to new ideas and new thinking.

Communication

You are able to mobilise thought and action in others through compelling communication skills. First and foremost, this means you listen to fully understand, rather than waiting to speak, or looking for weaknesses to exploit. You are courageous with what you say, but you remain sensitive; not alienating others, but bringing them with you.

Expertise

There is no gravitas without expertise. You may derive gravitas through being an authority in your field or you may derive it from marshalling the expertise of others. Either way, being fascinated by different opinions and being comfortable enough in your own skin to run towards what you don't yet know is a mark of gravitas.

Checklist for self-appraisal or for giving tailored feedback

Guiding Purpose

Clarity. Can you clearly express your guiding purpose both to yourself and to others? To what extent is your purpose brought to life through your behaviours and actions?

Humility. Are you focused on your guiding purpose unencumbered by the need to come across as clever or to impress others?

Responsiveness

Self-control. What more could you do to exhibit the emotional control to listen fully to others to build mutual understanding?

Adaptability. What feedback have you sought about how well you communicate with others of varying experience, understanding and seniority, as well as how well you adjust to different interactions and contexts?

Authenticity

Consistency. Although adapting to the situation, how well do you consistently put your values at the heart of everything you do?

Self-improvement. Guided by your values, to what extent do you continually strive to develop and improve your ability to work towards your guiding purpose?

Communication

Listen. How well do you listen to others with full attention, incorporating new views and information into your thinking and actions?

Courage. Do you feel you are brave enough to speak up when others are silent and humble enough to know when to hold back when others are catching up?

Expertise

Knowledge. What steps are you taking to refine and develop your knowledge and your ability to apply it? How well do you marshal the expertise of others across different disciplines and specialisms?

Curiosity. Are you as curious as you could be? Are you open to challenge and even criticism, always willing to run towards the unknown to learn more?

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