



Facets Focusing on the **Self** vs. Facets Focusing on **Others**

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In the last few months, I've come up with a new way of thinking about the Bates Model of Executive Presence. For a long while, we've understood that some facets tend to travel together, while other facets may "override" others or simply make it more difficult for them to come across. For example, a high degree of Authenticity may dampen perceptions of Restraint, and vice-versa. But over my last few dozen insights conversations, I've noticed some patterns come up that have led me to think of a new way to group facets.

Some facets call for the leader to assert the *self*. In other words, they require leaders to put themselves out there in some way as more of the center of attention. Other facets call for the leader to emphasize the *other* person first—playing more the role of receiver rather than transmitter. Beyond those two categories, there are facets that have some elements of both... or that don't really fit neatly into the first two categories.

As a caveat, let me emphasize that this categorization is admittedly simplistic. You could argue that every facet requires the engagement of the self with an "other" of some form. But I think you'd have to agree that some lean much more one way than the other.

Let's see how this plays out, and then we'll consider the implications when working with leaders.

Self-Focus Facets	Other-Focus Facets	Mixed Facets
Authenticity	Concern	Intentionality
Practical Wisdom	Humility	Interactivity
Confidence	Resonance	Assertiveness
Vision	Inclusiveness	Integrity
Appearance		Restraint
		Composure

The Self-Focus Facets

Some facets generally put the focus on the leader rather than those around him or her:

- With **Authenticity**, the leader needs to be transparent in sharing thoughts and feelings while also revealing the self through describing life lessons and personal experiences.
- With **Practical Wisdom**, we're looking for the leader to bring his or her insights and perspectives to discussions, cutting through complexity to get to the heart of issues.
- **Confidence** requires the leader to be willing to make decisions, take risks, own accountability, and basically take action.
- With **Vision**, the leader has to be able to develop and articulate a sense of where we're going and why, putting out a message that is rational and strategic but also emotional and inspiring.
- With **Appearance**, we're going to notice how the leader sets the tone, both nonverbally and verbally: Is their energy a powerful force that makes us aware of who they are?

The Other-Focus Facets

- **Concern** is all about developing and engaging others—not only being caring about them but being emotionally invested in their betterment and connected to the greater good.
- **Humility** is how open the leader is to the views and opinions of others—appreciating that the “building in” of others' input leads to the “buying in” of the idea—rather than trying to be the one with all the answers.
- With **Resonance**, we're looking first at how attentive and fully present a leader is with others... and then how much the leader is actively noticing what others think and feel.
- **Inclusiveness** is getting the *right* others to the table for input... and then empowering them to have a meaningful voice and be heard.

Mixed Facets

- **Intentionality** is all about creating healthy dialogue related to getting tasks done. The leader may need to assert the self to make this happen, but not at the expense of questioning others and facilitating back-and-forth to work out tactical matters.
- **Interactivity** reflects the quality and quantity of two-way communication, so this is inherently a mixed facet. On the self side, is the leader reaching out to others on regular, scheduled basis. On the other side, is the leader readily accessible to others, and does he or she really listen?

- The first three items of **Assertiveness** are more about the self: Does the leader speak up without shutting people down, and is the leader game to challenge points of view in a constructive way? The last three items are more about the other – Believing we can disagree without being disagreeable and being attuned to the dynamics of conflict with or between others.
- **Integrity** doesn't seem to fit neatly in either bucket. It tends to be rated highly in general, so perhaps that's why I haven't seen it correlated strongly to the facets in either group. You could argue that it's got more of a self-focus because people may be observing how your statements align with your behaviors, but there also is an aspect of how you treat others in comparison to their expectations.
- **Restraint** and **Composure** aren't easy to categorize, either. Sometimes leaders rated high in these qualities are seen as having more of an other focus, as their deliberate nature leads others to view them as good listeners who don't impose themselves on others. But in other instances, leaders high in these facets can come across as aloof and rather disconnected to the people and emotions at hand.

Implications of These Groupings

Okay, so what does it mean if we can group the facets in these ways? There are three patterns that you'll see:

1. **Leaders whose towering strengths are heavily slanted toward the self facets.**

When a leader is high in all or most of these, you're likely to see a leader who is perceived to be "a force of nature." On the positive side, people will often admire the energy, ideas, candor, and get-it-done mentality of such a leader. They are often quite rightly perceived to be "the smartest person in the room," and they make things happen.

On the downside, I often point out to such leaders that these qualities—especially when combined together—simply don't leave a lot of real estate for others in interactions. Even when the leader really *is* a humble person who *does* care about other people and wants to hear their ideas, those qualities just may not show up in the perceptions of others. Their stakeholders may or may not agree with them, but they are at risk of shutting down and disengaging. The alternative is to try to battle for air time, and that can feel like an intimidating prospect when facing off with such a leader.

In particular, I worry when I see a leader who has very high scores in these qualities and much lower scores in everything else. That says to me that this leader not only tends to dominate; it's at the expense of others feeling heard, empowered, and valued. This type of leader may also fall victim of a negative sort of halo effect: Because others may feel frustrated and dominated, they may rate *all* facets somewhat lower than an objective party would.

2. Leaders whose towering strengths are heavily slanted toward the other facets.

When leaders are high in the facets that focus on everyone else, the profile is the leader who is often much appreciated but who leaves people wanting in some key ways. On the plus side, people will rave about the leader as a great listener who is caring, open, engaged, and empowering. The other side of the coin is a leader who leaves people wondering what the leader really thinks and feels and who doesn't able step up to deliver insights or make a decisive call. Their energy may seem suspect. This leader may fall into the trap of being "always available" to others, failing to "put on their own oxygen mask before assisting others." As a result, they may struggle to get around to more important but less urgent matters such as formulating a vision or taking time to come up with real insights.

This profile is especially worrisome with a leader who needs to show up as a strategic partner, as their disinclination to challenge others or put themselves out there will hurt them in much of the Substance dimension.

One other curious note: In contrast to the self-oriented leader, this type of leader may have data that reflect a more positive halo effect: Because people love the attention and appreciation they get from this type of leader, they may rate *all* facets more generously than an objective party would.

3. Leaders who have a blend of strengths from both categories.

Of course, many leaders really don't have ExPI profiles dominated by the self facets or the other facets. In that case, I sometimes find it helpful to point out to leaders that they have a healthy *complementarity* of strengths. For example, let's say a leader rates highly not only in Practical Wisdom and Vision but also Concern. In that case, we have a leader who is not only smart and forward thinking and all about hitting big goals... This leader also will keep people engaged and feeling looked out for rather than cracking the whip all the time.

Likewise, I recently worked with a leader who was high in both Humility and Vision—two facets that often are not highly correlated. I was pleased to be able to tell this leader that she had two wonderfully complementary ingredients for leading innovation: She is open to others' ideas, to be sure, but she also has the capacity to pull those ideas together into a vision that appeals to people both rationally and emotionally.

The other positive for this type of profile is that you get the sense that this leader will find it easier to flex as needed. When the situation calls for stepping up and sharing insights, they can use those self facets. If they are driving change, they may find it easier to leverage a strength in focusing on what others are thinking and feeling. This bodes well, as a leader who only has strength in one side of this spectrum risks getting derailed eventually. However, you may need to remind such leaders to be deliberate about doing this, particularly if a specific facet is a towering strength that may threaten the more complementary qualities.

Coaching Leaders Who Are Heavily Slanted Toward the “Self” Facets

So what to do with a leader who is getting really high scores on these “self” facets and much lower scores on the “other” facets? First, you want to make them aware of this tendency and get them talking about the possible impact. I might say, “One theme I’m noticing is that you seem to be getting much higher scores on the facets that focus more on *you*. So people have real clarity on what *you* think and feel and know and want to do... but they’re giving you lower ratings on facets concerning your ability to be attuned to what *they* think and feel and want and need. Does this matter, do you think? What’s the impact of that?”

Assuming that the leader feels some motivation to work on this trend, I next would ask them what they might do differently. Typically, leaders will mention any number of things that could help:

- Asking more questions in general.
- Asking questions that specifically seek to surface what others think and feel.
- Using active listening techniques to play what back others have shared and seeking confirmation that they’ve got it right.
- Curbing their own tendency to jump in early and often with opinions and ideas.

These are all good ideas for starters. Additionally, it can be helpful to share ideas about how the self-oriented facets can be *leveraged* to amplify the other-oriented facets. Here are some things you can suggest that leaders do in this spirit:

- Leverage their action bias in Confidence by taking decisive steps to include others.
- Be authentic with others about their tendency to focus on airing their own views and their sincere desire to allow others to do the same more often.
- Remember that part of Practical Wisdom is “always seems to ask the right questions,” and doing so with others is a great way get more information prior to sharing our insights and judgment.
- Even for leaders with a strong Vision, learning more about what others want and need will help them frame the future state in a way that will make it come across even stronger.

Coaching Leaders Who Are Heavily Slanted Toward the “Other” Facets

The first steps here are identical to those you would take to leaders who are overly focused on the “self” facets. You want to bring this trend to their attention and ask them if they think it matters and what the impact might be. In both cases, leaders will almost always agree that it matters and that it’s worth changing their approach.

Then you’ll ask the leader what might be done about it. Interestingly, the results are often mixed when you ask them for their ideas. Here are some of the better ones that I’ve heard:

- Build in more preparation and practice time to be ready to show up with a point of view.
- Set limits on how constantly available you are to others.
- Continue taking active steps to include others, but make sure that the situation is one where participation is more important than speed.
- Continue to get information from others, but be more deliberate about synthesizing and sharing where you stand and why... and then make a decision if there’s one to be made.

Sometimes leaders will come up with bad ideas here, too, and you need to call them out. The most common is a leader saying something like, “Well, I really prefer more processing time to think things through... but I guess I need to just blurt out whatever I think and see what happens.” This leader is consider making a self-negating choice, which would result an inauthentic behavior that is unlikely to be effective. Far better to encourage the leader to plan

better for the interaction by anticipating the topic and related questions in order to have talking points in advance.

Here are some other ways you can get such a leader to leverage their strengths, some of which I've mentioned in previous articles on the various facets:

- Use the strengths of Humility, Resonance, Inclusiveness, etc. to go on a "Vision Listening Tour" in order to improve the Vision facet.
- Use these strengths to ask others questions about desired outcomes and downstream consequences, which will help out in Practical Wisdom.
- Be more specific about parameters and deadlines when facilitating group decision making, so we can enjoy the wisdom of the group without sacrificing efficiency. This will help in the Confidence facet.
- Remember that real Concern is not "feeding people a fish every day." It's teaching them how to fish. To be true to the leader's own high level of Concern, they need to teach people how to fish and be more willing to delegate. This also a good argument for changing that "always available" mentality.

Final Thoughts on Coaching Based on These Facet Clusters

Most leaders who take the ExPI will have some of both categories among their strengths. For those leaders, acknowledging the complementarity of their strengths and helping them appreciate when and how to flex each type of facet is really valuable.

When you're working with a leader who leans heavily toward one category or the other, though, you need to dig in a little harder as described above. All of these qualities of executive presence are within every leader. But when a leader slants more one way than the other, it may require more heavy lifting to get them to see how they can build strength in an area that may feel unnatural and uncomfortable to them.

When a leader can use the self facets as readily as the other facets, the result is a true balance of power.