

The Power of Identity

By Darren Gold, 21 May 2019

Ask someone what her identity is, and she will likely respond with a confused look. It's a strange question because we rarely give it much thought, and when we do, we struggle to come up with an answer. Yet, conscious or not, everyone has an identity. And it is our identity that drives much of our behaviour and, ultimately the results we get in life. Human beings will do everything in their power to act in ways consistent with their identities.

In my work coaching and advising senior leaders, I have been obsessed with figuring out what separates average performance from extraordinary performance. It turns out that identity plays a critical role. Consider the very best performers in athletics and the arts. Virtually every one of "the greats" identified as great before they had evidence that they were indeed extraordinary. In fact, they were absolutely convinced and certain of their greatness. It was their entire identity.

Perhaps the most famous example is Muhammad Ali. He didn't just identify as the greatest boxer, but as the "king of the world." And he wasn't shy about letting everyone know it. As a result, his actions and outcomes were a natural manifestation of his identity -- an impact that extended well beyond the boxing ring, influencing culture on a global scale.

A more present example, given the recent release of the movie *Bohemian Rhapsody*, is Queen's unusual, creative genius of lead singer Freddie Mercury. Many of us grew up singing their songs, but few may have realized how impactful Freddie's persona was on Queen's success. The band was

interviewed after Freddie's death and recounted that when Queen first formed, Freddie was already a rock star in his own mind. He was absolutely certain of this. Every ounce of his being reflected a man convinced of his own greatness. This is a common trait in all extraordinary performers.

So, if everyone has an identity, and if that identity is a key driver of human behaviour, wouldn't it make sense to choose an identity that is most likely to get the results that you want in life?

Much of my work with senior leaders is helping them do precisely this. The exercise is simple and powerful. Ask yourself, if you want to consistently take actions that produce extraordinary results in life -- in your career, your relationships, your health -- what would your identity need to be? Once you've identified a powerful identity that resonates with you, you must embody it. To do so, you have to say it repeatedly with massive physical and emotional intensity. This is the only way to build the kind of certainty needed for your identity to manifest.

My identity is as follows: I am an extraordinary leader, coach, author, husband, father, son, brother, colleague, friend. I command my mind and body to use every ounce of my unlimited potential and infinite capacity to massively and positively impact the lives of others. I say this every day, multiple times per day. I scream it out loud whenever I can. (I find the car to be the best place, despite the weird looks I get.)



The commitment to this practice has been life-changing for me. The actions I take and the results I get flow naturally from this identity. It is now so ingrained in me physically and emotionally that I have no choice. The desire to behave in a way that is consistent with my identity is too strong of a force to allow for anything else.

Take a look at your own life. I guarantee that your results are a direct product of your identity. And your identity is one of the most underleveraged assets you have. If you want different results in any area of your life, choose, embody and leverage the power of identity.

