



# IN THE KNOW

Your Monthly Newsletter from The Black Exec

ISSUE #1

## What Great Leaders Need to Do

“

The Key Actions That Set Exceptional Leaders  
Apart from the Rest

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### A WORD FROM BARRON

*Author of the top-selling book, The Black Exec and the Seven Myths*

It seems there is a lot of chatter about what leaders should be doing to address today's challenges. In my observation, good leaders typically take such advice from a narrow set of voices, usually comprised of people the leader trusts and respects. Great leaders seek input from their trusted voices and process those together with other relevant data to inform decisions.



For leaders of complex organizations, this skillset is indispensable. [Barron Witherspoon Sr.](#)

Leaders sometimes discard significant feedback and suggestions from many voices outside this carefully curated cohort. Even so, it is safe to say great leaders, more often than their peers, do a combination of actions which deliver the best results. Anyone who wants to succeed does well to study what great leaders do: those who analyze business success also do well to try to codify the actions of our most successful leaders.

So, to compliment all this effort, I thought we might take a slight left turn and examine two things exceptional leaders don't do: **they don't establish echo chambers and they don't erect barriers of bias.**

First, great leaders avoid echo chambers, which are environments where participants encounter beliefs that reinforce their pre-existing beliefs in a closed communication system insulated from rebuttal. They avoid echo chambers when they realize comfortable circular conversations offer little progress and only reinforce the status quo. Leaders know divergent, discontinuous ideas are required to stay ahead of competition. Great leaders also resist the tendency to overemphasize loyalty because this can stifle dissent. Loyalty to the truth is far better than loyalty to the leader, especially when the leader does not have the best idea in the room.

Second, Great leaders must root out bias. Organizational bias thrives when barriers are allowed to persist unchecked. Bias exists anytime an organizational system produces an inequitable or unfair outcome. In this sense, bias is measurable and organizational heads can know when bias is or is not present. The leader should recognize that people are unique, and their approaches will naturally differ. This will allow them to see individual attribution in the context of outcomes and results delivered.

So, if leaders take advice from a narrow set of voices, and great leaders avoid echo chambers and barriers of bias, then is there an indicated action from this discussion? In my view, it suggests the leaders must carefully consider the composition of that narrow group of trusted voices. They are wise to include voices prone to constructive dissent and open to opposing views. Exceptional leaders hear from diverse inputters who add value and variety to the leader's thinking while increasing the probability of finding, analyzing and implementing winning ideas.

**Great leaders don't avoid diversity of thought - they embrace it.**

*Barron Witherspoon Sr.*



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## "Vulnerability Can Be a Source of Leadership Strength."

I am so pleased to introduce our very first guest columnist, **Jeffery S. Perry**, CEO/Founder of **Lead Mandates LLC** and a Board Director at *Fortune Brands Innovations*. Jeffery's column suggests, "Vulnerability Can Be a Source of Leadership Strength."

His insights provide a nuanced view of an aspect of leadership that is often overlooked. Click on the link below to read the full article and feel free to share your thoughts with us.

[READ MORE](#)

## WORTH LISTENING TO

*Here are some interesting talks centered around leadership from leading voices.*

In light of Amazon's recent back-to-office directive, I feel this Ted Talk – by Debbie Lovich, a **Managing Director & Senior Partner** in the Boston office of Boston Consulting Group – is a timely topic. In Debbie's talk, "3 Tips for Leaders to Get the Future of Work Right," she discusses the changed work landscape post-Covid and how leaders can "reshape work to better fit our lives." It resonated – the video has garnered over two million views.



## ROUND AND ABOUT

September was an excellent month. I attended and spoke at the Harlem Book Fair and did a great fireside chat at the New Jersey Institute of Technology with Lawrence Pelham as the moderator. Both talks centered around my book. Below is a clip from my Harlem talk on "How to Create and Maintain Buzz for Your Book". Many thanks to Alice Maria James for the invitation to attend the fair, the opportunity to speak, and her ongoing support. I hope you find my comments of value.



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