



THE GLOBE AND MAIL

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SECTION B

# Report on Business

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### MONDAY MORNING MANAGER

## Leadership lessons from *The King's Speech*: Film illustrates three essential powers



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The Academy Awards next Sunday will reveal Hollywood's pick of the best film of 2010, but Toronto-based consultant Patrick O'Neill says it's no contest to pick the best leadership film.

In his Extraordinary Conversations newsletter, Mr. O'Neill calls *The King's Speech* one of the best contemporary portraits of a person being initiated into power.

"Every leader, no matter what level of the organization they work in, should see this film," he advises.

Mr. O'Neill notes that the film illustrates three powers of leadership that were identified in Angeles Arrien's book *The Four-Fold Way*:

#### Claiming the power of presence

The power of presence means that we are able to bring four intelligences forward: mental, emotional, spiritual and physical. Prince Albert, or Bertie as he was known, played by Colin Firth, was a stammering, tongue-tied isolated man embarrassed by his own deficiencies.

But the film shows how he was supported by his speech therapist, Lionel Logue, played by Geoffrey Rush, to deal with the loneliness, neglect and bullying of his childhood.

"The leader's journey often requires facing difficult issues and challenges that have interfered with development or entrapped them in 'unfinished business,'" Mr. O'Neill writes.



Colin Firth's Oscar-nominated portrayal of George VI in *The King's Speech* shows a leader finding his own 'voice of authority,' consultant Patrick O'Neill says. ALLIANCE FILMS/THE WEINSTEIN COMPANY

"Presence is earned when leaders are able to remove these obstacles to befriending the self, and allow their gifts and talents to surface above the insecurities."

#### Claiming the power of communication

The focus in the film is on his struggle to communicate without stammering. He is frustrated by the various therapists and the methods they suggest, such as stuffing a half dozen glass balls down his throat while trying to read out loud. Mr. Logue's unconventional approach of singing, swearing and camaraderie starts to pay off as the member

of royalty starts to trust the therapist and himself. "This is the leader's challenge. He or she must trust that they can find their own authentic voice. That is the voice that inspires and empowers others, the voice of true authority," Mr. O'Neill observes.

#### Claiming the power of position

When his brother, King Edward, abdicates, the prince must confront his duty as heir to the throne. He is understandably fearful and uncertain, but realizes he must serve the nation. Through this decision, Mr. O'Neill stresses, he generates a communication breakthrough:

"The power of position means responsibility is taken for leadership. It is the willingness to face the challenges of an uncertain future from a place of courage, integrity and action. Certainly, the timing of Bertie's ascendancy could not have been less opportune. Europe was in chaos. Rather than focusing on his faults and deficiencies, Bertie enlists the support he needs to overcome his stammering and deliver a speech that not only declares war on Nazism but also transforms him into King George VI, one of Britain's greatest monarchs."

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