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# How a Group Head of Technology Went from Near-Termination to Leading Two Divisions with Direct CEO Partnership

*Client name has been changed to protect confidentiality.\**

## The Solution

Michael engaged with our programme, and we immediately identified that he needed to know if the CEO firstly wanted this centralised technology leadership role at all, and secondly, if he wanted Michael specifically to fill it.

We prepared for a conversation that could have ended his tenure.

Michael asked the CEO two direct questions: "Are you serious about supporting technology leadership across this organisation? Do you want me as the person leading it?" Then he gave feedback: "You say you're committed to this function, but you don't stand up for it. You're paying lip service."

That conversation established a foundation of trust that had been completely absent. From that single conversation, everything shifted.

## How Our Coaching Rebuilt Strategic Influence

- Identified who really held power and built a strategic network at C-suite level, not operational level
- Delegated operational relationships that felt safe to his senior team, creating space to operate where he actually needed to be
- Transformed technical data into business narrative the board and C-suite could act on
- Developed frameworks built on business language which fundamentally changed how he was perceived across the organisation
- Shifted his time and focus from operational specialists to those who could actually greenlight his strategic initiatives
- Learned how to fill the group-level role rather than operating as a senior specialist

## The Results

Michael was given responsibility for a second division directly connected to his area. His team expanded significantly, as did his influence across the group.

The CEO now tells Michael, **"Just tell me what arguments you want me to present, and I'll present them."** Michael has become a trusted strategic partner.

Managing directors who previously avoided him recognized the strategic value of group-level technology leadership. They seek his input rather than resist his involvement. The same board members who couldn't interpret his data now understand his strategic contributions.

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# **How a Director of Strategy Overcame Extreme Imposter Syndrome to Transform a Scapegoated Division and Secure Multi-Million Pound Funding**

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***"I didn't have the doctorate my predecessor had. My peers were established men who didn't welcome me. The division I was leading had terrible morale and was blamed for everything. I was questioning whether I belonged there at all."***

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She had the double promotion. The title. The division of several hundred people.

Lauren was Director of Strategy at a major utility company. This was a double promotion putting her firmly in her first C-suite role. She should have been celebrating. Instead, she was drowning in self-doubt while finishing one role and starting another, walking into a toxic environment where her division was the organisation's scapegoat. She couldn't shake the feeling she didn't belong.

## **The Challenge**

Lauren's imposter syndrome wasn't just typical new-role nerves. Her predecessor had a doctorate. She didn't. She'd been promoted above someone more charismatic who many saw as the natural successor, and she felt them snapping at her heels. She couldn't shake the thought: I'm not as qualified as the person before me, and maybe that other person would have been better.

Her new peer group was an established team of men with entrenched power dynamics who didn't make her welcome. They brought data and information to meetings she couldn't interpret and frankly didn't want to spend time bringing her up to speed. For the first six months, she sat in meetings in complete silence while they excluded her from key decisions.

The division she now led, several hundred people, had very poor morale with pervasive negativity. Strategy was seen as the organization's scapegoat, blamed for problems and holding low credibility across the business. Her boss was on-side but practically invisible, too busy to provide support.

As long as Lauren doubted herself, she couldn't find her voice to speak up or lead effectively. She had brilliant vision for how things could develop, but the self-doubt was paralyzing.

## The Solution

Lauren engaged with our programme to transform self-doubt into impactful leadership. Her turning point came from the realization that until she believed she had a right to be in the role, nothing else would work.

We started by focusing on her confidence and why she deserved to be there, not just surface-level affirmations, but genuine examination of her qualifications, capabilities, and what she brought that her predecessor hadn't. This foundation was critical. Without it, she couldn't present to hostile peers, ask for their time, or admit what she didn't know.

## How Our Coaching Rebuilt Strategic Influence

- Overcame imposter syndrome by addressing the comparisons to her predecessor and the charismatic rival directly
- Turned vision into a roadmap her peers could believe was achievable. She learned to acknowledge why the division was seen negatively, present what needed to change, and show a realistic strategy for delivery—not just nice words
- Prepared her to present her vision and strategy to the peer group, then meet individually with each to build their belief in her capability.
- Gave Lauren techniques to make credible contributions in meetings even when she didn't know the detail being discussed. She learned to have her voice heard rather than sitting in silence, and to get comfortable saying "I don't know, take me through it"
- As Lauren had to make major organizational changes about who stayed and who left, we worked with her and HR to develop clear rationale and communicate decisions without people banding against her

## The Results

Division morale transformed. People could see change was possible and she had the plan to deliver it. The same peers who didn't welcome her began respecting her voice and seeking her input. She successfully presented to the board to secure multi-million pound funding—something her predecessor had attempted multiple times without success.

She had technical expertise, vision, and interpersonal skills all along. What she gained was confidence to use them, frameworks to communicate strategically, and techniques to contribute credibly even in unfamiliar territory.



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## How a Senior Leader Told He "Wasn't Passionate Enough" Learned to Show Authentic Engagement Without Becoming Someone He's Not

*Client name has been changed to protect confidentiality.\**

***"I was told I didn't get the promotion because I wasn't passionate enough. But I am passionate. I just don't shout from the rooftops. How could I show passion while still being me?"***

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Amir was a senior leader in a global organisation with degrees from leading global universities, and extensive technical expertise. Despite his qualifications, he'd just been denied a much-wanted promotion. The feedback: he wasn't passionate enough. For someone naturally introverted, contained, and genuinely humble, this felt impossible to fix without betraying who he was.

## **The Challenge**

Amir's challenge wasn't a lack of passion. It was that his quieter style made it invisible. He didn't value his own achievements. Despite his degrees and doctorate, he didn't see that he'd accomplished anything significant. This genuine humility meant he rarely spoke up to position himself.

Two peers regularly undermined him in meetings, ganging up on him. Because Amir was low-key and introverted, he struggled to deal with their attacks, seeing them as a united front he couldn't challenge.

The organisation told him he needed to position himself better for senior roles. But to Amir, positioning meant being loud, blowing your own trumpet, being arrogant and boastful. He faced an impossible choice: become someone he wasn't and be miserable, or stay authentic and remain invisible.

## **The Solution**

Amir engaged with our programme to find a way to show passion and position himself authentically. We helped Amir see that positioning yourself well doesn't mean speaking constantly, regardless of whether you have something meaningful to say. He could be authentically himself and still be visible. We did extensive work helping him recognise his expertise, qualifications, and skills. He didn't see it—it was just what he'd done. As he started to appreciate this, he developed much stronger quiet confidence and understood why he had a right to speak.

## How Our Coaching Rebuilt Strategic Influence

- We worked extensively on developing his questioning skills, learning how to use the power of questions to evoke emotions and genuine engagement in others. Because other people felt emotional and engaged, they perceived Amir as more passionate himself, even though he wasn't changing his core style
- We identified ways he could make meaningful contributions and speak in meetings without having to be the one who spoke all the time or looked for attention
- For the two peers who undermined him, Amir stopped seeing them as a united front. He started meeting with them individually before meetings where he'd present strategies, working through their objections one-on-one. Then in meetings, he could bring them in: **"Peter raised some great questions when I met with him recently."** He brought them in as individuals, representing their cases and how they'd overcome objections together. This wise use of politics transformed detractors into allies
- Identified how Amir wanted to show up, how he wanted to be perceived, and what he wanted to be known for. This revealed gaps he needed to close, and we coached him to behave in ways true to himself while building much stronger presence

## The Results

By evoking emotion and engagement in others through questioning, Amir was seen as much more passionate—without changing his contained, thoughtful nature.

Amir got different responses when he contributed. This created a self-fulfilling prophecy, as he saw better responses, it became easier to do more, and he was no longer invisible.

The two individuals who had ganged up on him became genuine collaborators. By engaging them individually and investing strategically in those relationships, he built strong connections with both.

The tools and frameworks became so natural they're just who Amir is now, an authentic version of himself with much greater influence.



# About CommsMasters

In 2001, Heather Campbell recognised that senior technical leaders needed different approaches than traditional leadership development offered. That insight became our specialisation.

Over 24 years working with 3,000+ technical leaders across FTSE 100 engineering firms, multinational manufacturers, and global energy companies, we've built something that didn't exist: frameworks designed specifically for how analytical minds think, operate, and create strategic value. And an exclusive, vetted network of peers to stress-test ideas before bringing them to your team.

Purpose-built for senior technical leaders who must lead interdisciplinary teams across different working cultures, translate complexity into executive influence, defend engineering decisions to finance teams, and communicate project risks to boards that measure success in quarterly returns.

## Get Started Today

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