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What Jason Bourne and Science Teach Us About the Astonishing Power of Humility

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By anyone's standard Jeffrey Weiner is a redonkulous [success](#).

You'd think being producer of the massively successful *Jason Bourne* series would be enough. But amazingly, Weiner also has a "day job"--as managing partner of one of the most successful accounting firms in the world.

The surprising secret to his success?

Humility.

It's a trait quickly gaining credence among scientists as a true driver of [success](#).

But first, a bit more on Weiner's achievements.

Weiner's vaunted, and vault-filling, *Jason Bourne* movies have grossed more than [\\$1.5 billion worldwide](#).

He also runs Robert Ludlum's production company (books, video games, mini-TV series, and the hallmark *Bourne* movies), bringing the *Bourne* bounty to over \$2 billion dollars.

He's managing partner of Marcum LLP, a near half-billion dollar top 15 independent accounting firm that Weiner has utterly transformed from a small Long Island accounting practice into a 30 office worldwide growth machine.

Oh, by the way, he's also the only accounting firm managing partner to ever win [Accounting Today's top leader award](#)--twice.

Which is cool and all but once I got a "World's #1 Boss" mug from an assistant.

So I got that going for me.

Which is nice.

You'd expect talking with Weiner you'd uncover the Kanye West of accounting--full of success and full of himself.

Instead, Weiner exemplified each of the key traits of a humble leader:

1. Humble leaders are willing to admit when they're wrong and accept help

[Groundbreaking studies](#) on humility reveal that the trademark characteristic of a humble leader is willingness to admit when they make a mistake and recognize where they need help (know their strengths/limitations).

When I asked Weiner the keys to his momentous success, he immediately said:

"You surround yourself with people a lot smarter than you, then [empower](#) them." He later said, "Too many people die with their mistakes. When you make a mistake, admit it, correct it, and move on."

He went on to say (in response to how he manages a [crazy portfolio of work](#)):

"You can't do it all yourself. You have to entrust others."

2. Humble leaders know they aren't the center of the universe

[Research](#) also shows that humble leaders know the world doesn't revolve around them and are energized by this understanding.

Again Weiner typified this finding. When I asked about his leadership philosophy, he said:

"It starts and ends with--it's not all about you."

In fact, the extent to which Weiner expressed fierce admiration for *Bourne* star Matt Damon--and the reason for his admiration--was very telling.

As Weiner told me of working closely with Damon:

"Matt Damon is the hardest working actor in the business. He really cares. He's all in on the set. He cares about everything that's happening, he takes it personal, he takes pride in his performance. He's not some pampered actor doing the minimum who holes up in his trailer. He gives 110 percent and cares about the entire production. He talks to everyone on the set and views himself as an equal. The person doing the catering is just as important as anyone else. He's just as humble as when he started."

I found myself wondering what an Oscar acceptance speech would be like with Damon and Weiner on stage--they'd probably both side step credit and end up giving it to Jimmy Kimmel (following the new Oscar's tradition of misplacing credit).

3. Humble leaders are hungry to keep learning/improving

[Research](#) also shows that humble leaders appreciate new information and have a constant desire to learn and improve.

The first thing Weiner said to me was that he "was a success 60 years in the making." He was speaking of how he's constantly learning, improving, adapting.

4. Humble leaders habitually empower and celebrate others

[Research](#) shows humble leaders revel in empowering and celebrating others. By far, the word "empowerment" was the word I heard most often from Weiner.

5. Humble leaders are winners

Finally, [research](#) indicates that the humble are higher achievers, have less employee turnover, and higher employee satisfaction. One only needs to glance at Weiner's resume to see how that fits.

All in all, humility strengthens, not weakens, a leader because it creates followers who would walk through fire in support.

And Jeffrey Weiner is living proof.

Importantly, author [Ashley Merryman](#) says research shows "both arrogance and humility can be taught, and caught."

So, to be a wildly successful leader, you don't need to produce Hollywood blockbusters and run a huge accounting practice--you just need to practice being humble.

And that's something anyone can do.

That's something *you* can do, even if you weren't Bourne with it.