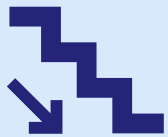


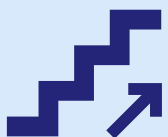
## The more senior you are, the more optimistic you become

Wharton BC Research Partner John Higgins and his co-author Professor Megan Reitz [speaking truth to power](#)

Leaders are more likely to:

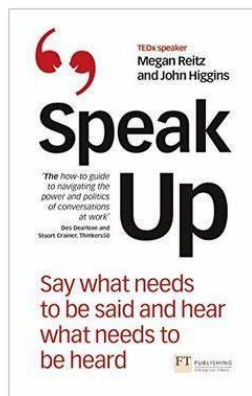


**Underestimate** the challenges employees face



**Overestimate** the degree to which they feel safe to speak up to you (and your skills in listening to points of view that don't match with your take on the world)

Research over the last seven years into how employees speak up at work — and more recent research into politics in the workplace specifically — have shown us that **leaders tend to be ill-equipped to handle their outspoken employees**



WHY?

1

This is partly because your powerful position may mean you are **intimidating to others**, so you don't hear what needs to be heard

2

It is also due to **advantage blindness** — leaders tend to carry multiple labels that convey status, for example, CEO, white, or male



When you have these labels, you can be the last person to realize how impactful they are. It isn't until you *don't* have those labels that you can really experience how consequential they are on the ability to speak up — and be heard.

[Do You Have "Advantage Blindness"? \(hbr.org\)](#)

[The Problem with Saying "My Door Is Always Open" \(hbr.org\)](#) [The Wrong Way to Respond to Employee Activism \(hbr.org\)](#)