

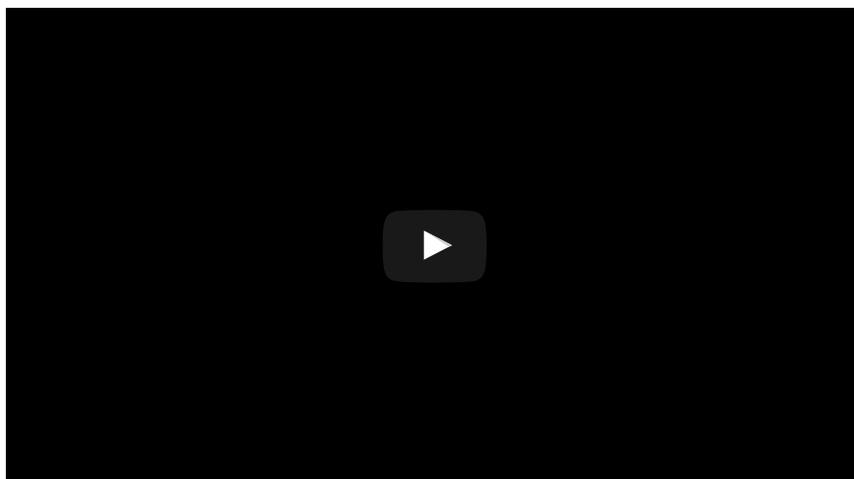
What's Your Clout Category?

📄 LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

The best boxing movie ever made is...(drumroll please)...

Cinderella Man.

You might have thought I was going to say Rocky (or perhaps Rocky II, III, IV, V, or VI), but as much as I love a good Rocky Balboa vs. Apollo Creed showdown, I'm sold on Cinderella Man. The movie tells the true story of Jim Braddock, an up-and-coming boxer in the 1920s who became a down-and-outer destroyed by injury and by the Depression until his inspiring comeback. Check out this clip from his first comeback fight.



Braddock gives a visual image of “clout.” But what’s clout? Years ago I co wrote a book called [Clout](#), and one of our first tasks was to define this word.

The dictionary defines clout as “a blow with the fist,” “a long, powerful hit in baseball,” “power or muscle,” and “influence or pull.” We tied clout most closely to this last definition because I believe “clout” and “influence” are two sides of the same coin. There are two ways of being influential, two ways of affecting people and outcomes—clout and influence.

Clout is the direct, authoritative, cut-through-the-red-tape attitude and position necessary to produce results. Influence is more shadowy and indirect, less clearly understood. Jim Braddock displays clout—one powerful hook after another. On the other hand, Russell Crowe influences our perception of Braddock through his acting.

What about you? Are you a man or woman of clout? How about influence? Clout is not simply about having a position of power (although that can help); it’s about your ability and willingness to directly cause change.

In my experience, when it comes to clout, people generally fall into one of seven categories:

1. **People who have less clout than they think they do:** These big talkers drop names of whom they know and brag on what they’ll do someday. They gravitate toward the spotlight, looking for any chance to sound off about themselves.
2. **People who have more clout than they think they do:** These people exert influence naturally. They just don’t know it. One little push and their untapped influential potential could spread far.
3. **People who are under-applying their clout:** Unlike the humble influences of category #2, these are the “do less with more” people. Instead of untapped potential, it’s wasted potential. They are talented, but for some reason (lack of confidence, laziness, rebellion) they refuse to live up to what is expected of them. The king who abdicates his throne, the college athlete who doesn’t utilize his talent, the executive who doesn’t challenge his team to think outside the box, the parent who doesn’t steer his children.
4. **People who are wrongly applying their clout:** History is full of notorious characters—Adolf Hitler in Nazi Germany, Joseph Kony in modern-day Uganda—that used their considerable persuasive ability for destruction. It also shows up, though, in leaders who abuse power to line their own coffers or fuel their insecure egos.
5. **People who have clout in one area but feel powerless in another:** Millions of people have a certain part of life in great shape but feel like a total failure in another. The woman who is respected and capable at work, but her kids are out of control and her husband has filed for divorce. The man who is a great dad but plagued by incompetence and insecurity at work.
6. **People who are at the sunrise of life building clout:** I love to work with these young innovators. That’s why I work with groups like [Praxis](#). Gen Yers want to influence the world, so they are looking to increase their clout. Sure, there are bad ways to do this and wrong motives, but I love young people

with the desire to make a difference.

7. **People who want their clout to reach into the next generation:** These people want a legacy. I see this all the time with business founders. They built their vision from scratch to become a financial force, and it has become part of their identity. When it comes time to retire, these guys are plagued by fear because they want the things they emphasized in the company to continue to guide the next generation.

Which category or categories are you in? I know that I'm in #7 and I hope I'm in #2. I sure hope that I'm not in #1 or #4. Whichever category you find yourself in, however, there's a to-do list that comes out of it. For some of you, there's a pretty dramatic shift you'll need to make—from applying your clout for selfish gain to working to make an impact. For others, it's a more subtle shift—making strategic changes regarding when and where to utilize your clout.

At the end of the day, clout is all about direct impact. It's about approaching problems in your personal life, your professional life, or in society head on. Like Jim Braddock, you want to land a punch and land it on something worth hitting.



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