

The Janus paradox

*In*[*ancient Roman religion*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion_in_ancient_Rome)*and*[*myth*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman_mythology)*,****Janus****is the*[*god*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Roman_deities)*of beginnings and transitions, and thereby of gates, doors, doorways, passages and endings. He is usually depicted as having two faces, since he looks to the future and to the past. It is conventionally thought that the month of*[*January*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/January)*is named after Janus* (Wikipedia)

Leaders have to become gifted at facing in (at least) two directions WITHOUT appearing two-faced.

The challenge is often to represent positions, opinions and predicaments **to other people’s satisfaction** while adding your interpretation as a leader. You may have to represent..

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Who? Or What?** | **To?** |
| Your boss | Your team |
| Your team | Your boss |
| Your service | Your governance |
| Your governance | Your service |
| Your audiences | Your colleagues |
| Your corporate vision | Anyone showing an interest |
| Etc | etc |

In each case, how you do this will influence **others’ views of your integrity as a leader**. Your word and your viewpoint will be scrutinised whether you want it to be or not. You will have to choose carefully what you say and how.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Dos** | **Don’ts** |
| Be prepared to be unpopular at times | Go native; and get a reputation for obstinate loyalties |
| Listen.. and show you’re listening | Be impatient about others’ views |
| Demonstrate understanding & empathy | Appear to make arbitrary decisions |
| Agree and disagree openly | Be afraid of challenge or discomfort |
| Be persuadable | Be too easily swayed |
| Ask for considering-the-issue time | Dismiss plans B, C, D… |
| Explain multiple positions where necessary | Miss any opportunity of debating options & choices |
| Turn majority decisions into consensus wherever possible | Wield hierarchy as a ‘put-down’ or use borrowed power |
| Work at ‘closing the deal’ | Forget to give follow-up and ‘new development’ info |