

Understanding Authentic Leadership

Leading with the true you

Andy Turnbull



ANDY TURNBULL

UNDERSTANDING AUTHENTIC LEADERSHIP LEADING WITH THE TRUE YOU

Understanding Authentic Leadership: Leading with the true you

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Andy Turnbull is an executive coach and business consultant, having spent well over 15 years in various senior management and leadership roles within national and international organisations. Originally an accountant by profession, he has been a finance director, managing change and developing strategy.

He now particularly works with managers and leaders who have recognised that continuously trying to be something else, or adapting themselves to suit their environment, can come at too high a personal cost and are now committed to developing a more authentic approach to their leadership and management.

This book sets out the key themes, challenges and benefits of authentic leadership, both for individual leaders, the people working with them, the organisations themselves and wider society.

If you are committed to taking this further and applying these concepts to your own situation, then working with an external, independent coach can provide the space and objectivity needed to support you on your journey towards becoming an authentic leader.

Through increased levels of self-awareness, a fuller sense of your true self, and through accepting your innate values and natural strengths, you can become more effective, creative and productive and lead a happier and more fulfilling life as a result – both within the workplace and beyond.

If you are interested in learning more, then contact Andy directly:

Visit: www.andy-turnbull.com/authentic-leadership

Email: info@andy-turnbull.com

Phone: +44 20 8090 7541



1 INTRODUCTION

“To thine own self be true”

– Shakespeare

In this book we will explore how being an authentic leader could be good for you, your team, your business or organisation and society as a whole. We will explore the role of the leader, what authenticity means, how to become an authentic leader and the benefits and challenges that this presents.

Origins

The concept of authenticity was explored partway through the 20th century with the rise of the human potential movement. The emphasis on exploring and developing human potential has led to much thinking, debate and research in this area. The possibility that you can be your true self as a leader has led to a great deal of resources and support being available to those willing to do their own personal development. This includes leadership development programs, executive coaching, a whole range of psychometric tools, team building exercises and so on.

For many people work represents the most significant chunk of their life, taking up five days a week (if not more) and eight hours a day, plus a great deal of overtime, both paid and unpaid, also being part of the norm. There has therefore been a lot of enquiry into how people can have a more fulfilling working life.

An enlightened employer will recognise that high staff turnover is a significant cost. If highly experienced and well-trained staff are constantly leaving then this creates a loss of knowledge plus unwelcome additional costs to recruit the right people, provide them with a suitable induction process and support them as they adjust to their new environment. Whilst this is true of any member of staff, it is even more pronounced for senior executives and those in leadership positions. The impact of high staff turnover at this level can undermine the implementation of a strategy and put back progress of an organisation for months or even years.

Authentic leadership offers people and organisations the possibility that working in senior leadership positions can be fulfilling and rewarding, leading to continuity of staff at the highest levels. This in turn brings consistency to an organisation, enabling it to successfully implement its strategy and build on previous successes with a stable senior team.

At the same time as the rise of the human potential movement, there have been dramatic changes in technology and management practice.

Management developments

In the 1980s and 1990s there was an understanding that flatter management structures with fewer levels of management promoted efficiency – as well as simply cutting out costs. The links in the chain from the person at the bottom to the person at the top are now fewer than they typically were in the past. Even in large organisations there is a tendency to arrange people into smaller groups and teams where everyone gets to know one another.

Technological developments

Dramatic changes in technology have led to an explosion in the ability to communicate with each other. The introduction of work emails, instant messaging, internal TV communications, videoconferencing, intranets and now social media platforms has further shortened the communication links between us all. In an era where celebrities and politicians are under scrutiny and many mistakes that they make are tweeted around the world in minutes, the expectations around transparency are now higher than they ever have been. The implications are that the rise in authenticity is no longer a best practice for a few enlightened organisations, but is becoming a necessity for those in senior positions. Every speech is broadcast, every comment is reported and every Christmas party is subject to scrutiny by umpteen cameras in smart phones!

Whilst, in the past, leaders could have expected to have a private life and have confidential conversations that were at odds with the role and persona that they projected to the rest of the organisation, this is no longer a realistic option. It is now very easy for staff to see and comment upon actions by senior managers – and to point out publicly those that are not in line with the official company values.

Extended lifespan

The benefits to you as an individual are also significant. Advances in medical knowledge and technology in particular now mean that our expected lifespan is longer than it ever has been before and it continues to extend. The pressure upon pensions has also increased. Gone are the days when we could expect to retire at age 60 or take early retirement as we will be living far longer than we ever anticipated. Our accumulated pension funds therefore need to be greater than was considered necessary by previous generations.

The inevitable conclusion of this is that we will be working for longer and retiring later. So instead of working for 40 years, we could be working for 50 or 60. Whilst maybe we could tolerate 40 years working in jobs and careers that we only found partially satisfying, working for 50 or 60 years in unsatisfactory and unsatisfying work is unlikely to be achievable. Doing work that we enjoy and we find meaningful and refreshing is one of the few ways to really make this new reality a practical and sustainable option.



Whilst for many people this might just mean choosing to work in a job that they enjoy, for those in demanding leadership positions it may require much more internal work and personal development – but this could lead to an ultimately very satisfying and rewarding career.

Purpose-driven organisations

The promise of authentic leadership means that the individual can bring their true selves, their authentic selves to their work and this will be welcomed by the organisation that they work within. The critical alignment between the values and purpose of the individual and the values and purpose of the organisation means that what is good for the individual can also be beneficial for the business. A purpose-driven and values-based organisation that is delivering something of value to its customers and making a difference in the world will be a beacon of hope to those who have a similar outlook.

Authenticity in organisations ultimately comes from the authenticity of those working within it and leading it. In the end an organisation is nothing more than a collection of individuals. Choosing to invest in yourself to become an authentic leader will not only be rewarding for you in your career, for your general well-being and happiness, but will also play a significant part in aligning your organisation and turning it into a more authentic business. The impact on customers, staff and shareholders could be significant and the long-term success of the organisation could be that much greater because it will continue to attract people that share its values and purpose.

Examining the merits

If you are reading this wondering how authentic leadership could be developed to improve the profitability of your business, then like any other worthwhile endeavour it is an investment for the long term and requires dedication and commitment but can have long-term positive benefits, both tangible and intangible.

If you are reading this as a new leader wondering how to make your new role enjoyable and sustainable, then I hope you will pick up some useful insights from this book. Authenticity is a journey and you have a choice to take that first step. In the long run a commitment towards authenticity in your leadership role will set you apart from many other leaders who instead may suffer from stress and burnout.

Critics may say that authenticity in leadership is a naive hope and comes from an idealism which does not really translate into the real world. The response to that is that most significant leaders, those household names that we all know, were true to themselves and lived authentic lives. They did not subscribe to one blueprint model of leadership or focus narrowly on short-term results. Instead they built something significant for the long term and aligned themselves so closely with the brand that it was difficult to tell the two apart – Steve Jobs at Apple and Richard Branson at Virgin to give just two obvious examples.

Whether one considers authenticity in leadership as useful in its own right or as just a necessary and pragmatic response to the pressures of increased scrutiny, transparency and longevity, it is a topic that is likely to be the subject of further interest, discussion and research in the coming years.

1 WHY BOTHER WITH AUTHENTIC LEADERSHIP?

Developing your own authentic approach to leadership could be both good for you and for your organisation or business – but is it worth the investment?

1.1 WHY BOTHER WITH AUTHENTIC LEADERSHIP

With so much of our day spent at work, most of us would prefer to do something that we find enjoyable, satisfying and rewarding. Indeed it was called “work” because it requires energy to do it.

1.1.1 FINDING MEANING

A scientist would say that energy is expended in pushing a rock up a hill. It takes hard work and we feel tired at the end of it. We are working against gravity and against friction. Even on a flat surface, rolling a stone will require energy to get it moving and to overcome the friction of the ground. Pushing it downhill is a lot easier and indeed you’re likely to lose control of it. In Greek mythology there is the myth of Sisyphus – a man who was punished by the gods and after his death was made to push a rock up a mountain for all eternity. When the rock reached the top it would roll down to the bottom again and Sisyphus had to start this meaningless and futile task all over again. He had to repeat this task forever, pushing a rock up a hill only for it to roll down again. One can imagine Sisyphus repeatedly expending energy and getting nowhere, feeling exhausted and frustrated by this futile act.



If your work feels like the myth of Sisyphus then it is well named! If it is hard work, leaving you exhausted and feeling that it is all futile, then the potential for authenticity in your work presents the hope of a great reward. If we can find work that does not require so much energy from us, because it feels natural and easy to us, and has a purpose and direction rather than feeling like a futile exercise, then we have the promise of a more happy and sustainable working life. Many philosophers have said that work is an essential human activity, a creative one that expresses who we are. If, however, work is futile and does not express who we are, but instead frustrates us and closes us in, then this is unlikely to be sustainable for the long-term.

At its best our working lives can allow us to be creative and express our true selves, to be energised by our work rather than drained by it, and feel that it is worthwhile, making a difference in the world. It is the potential to do the work that we are naturally gifted at, to play to our strengths. You could say that is the work that we were born to do.

1.1.2 CHALLENGING WORK

Leadership positions will often feel challenging, not because we do not like the work but because the issues that we are facing have no right answer. The more senior you become the more the routine problems get solved by people lower down the hierarchy – by middle managers following policies, rules and procedures and getting advice on the right thing to do in the situation. This is possible because that situation has arisen in the past and an expert in that area can advise what to do. Leadership tends not to work like that.

The challenges and choices that come up to senior leaders have no right answer because they are often looking into the future and making strategic decisions in an ambiguous and uncertain world. This requires hard work and thought even if you are the most authentic of leaders. However bringing an authentic approach to your leadership will make it much more sustainable. One of the challenges of being in a senior role is that it is tiring to constantly be thinking about problems that have never been confronted before. The result can be working longer and longer hours to manage an ever more complex organisation. Authentic leadership offers the promise of making these pressurised and complex roles more sustainable for the long term – and even enjoyable and rewarding.

1.1.3 EMBRACING TRANSPARENCY

In a world where increasing transparency means that there is nowhere to hide, the prospect of being caught out and having your errors and mistakes broadcast via social media to all those that you know and like, may fill you with horror.

Becoming an authentic leader can mitigate this risk because what you will say and do in the outside world is also what you are thinking and feeling in your inside world. You will no longer have reasoning and opinions that you are trying to keep secret from others, or actions and decisions that you're embarrassed or ashamed of.

1.1.4 PERSONAL COST

For many people in the workplace and for leaders in particular, success at work can come at a significant personal cost. For example, it is perfectly possible to feel trapped into a high-paid and high-pressure job because you have built up a lifestyle with a high number of living expenses and now find it very difficult to move into a different role or career because the cut in income would be unsustainable. As a result people continue to do work that they no longer enjoy, to the extent that their health suffers – both physically and mentally – and can result in a breakdown or burn out.

If you recognise that scenario, then now might be a good time to stop and consider what compromises you are having to make at work and the personal cost that you are enduring. If that was to extend into the future then at some point something will have to give and it is likely to be you and not the organisation that you work for!

1.1.5 WORTH YOUR SALT

There are many people who have picked up the mistaken belief that you can only earn a reasonable income by doing work that you do not enjoy. Indeed many HR departments use the word “compensation” to describe the income that you receive for the work that you do. This is perhaps just an accurate reflection of the truth – that the only way to get people to do some of this work is to compensate them in some way, by the salary that they earn.

Some believe that the word “salary” originally comes from ancient Rome, where salt was highly valued to the extent that soldiers were even paid in salt. Whether true or not, the idea has given rise to the phrase to “be worth your salt”. Potentially the word “salary” is more positive than the word “compensation” – compensation suggests that you are losing something for which you need to be compensated, whilst taking the Roman view, you can be “worth your salt” whether you enjoy the work or not.

Work doesn't have to be so bad that you need to be compensated for the hardship that you have endured, instead you could be paid in recognition of the value that you create and so being “worth your salt”.



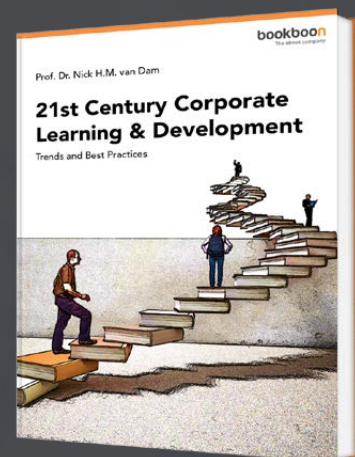
1.1.6 REWARDING WORK

Finally, authentic leadership opens up the possibility for you to enjoy work so much that your pay becomes a secondary reward – with the main reward being the satisfaction and pleasure that comes from the work itself. Maybe it also comes from the knowledge that you are creating something of value for your staff, your customers and the wider world.

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If you are at the beginning of your career, or in the early stages of leadership, then exploring the ideas of authentic leadership and what that could mean for you, your loved ones and your future could be one of the most significant things that you can do for an exciting and rewarding working life.

Summary:

Authentic leaders may benefit from:

- more meaningful work
- more sustainable work – even when it’s challenging
- being ready to embrace transparency – there’s no fear of being “found out”
- reduced risk of stress and burn out
- seeing their salary as a recognition of value created rather than compensation for the negative impact of their work
- being primarily motivated by the work itself

1.2 WHY AN ORGANISATION MIGHT BE INTERESTED IN AUTHENTIC LEADERSHIP

The majority of successful businesses and organisations whether public, private or third sector, for profit or not-for-profit, recognise that their main asset is their people. They may have many assets from property and machinery through to know-how, patents and trademarks, covering the whole range of tangible and intangible items. However all assets need either managing or maintaining – or creating in the first place. Most assets are therefore reliant upon the imagination and creativity of the people in the organisation.

1.2.1 ATTRACTING THE RIGHT PEOPLE

Organisations are likely to be much clearer about the type of people that they want to recruit when those making the hiring decisions have clear criteria. Authentic leaders will understand what it takes to be a motivated employee in their company and so will have a clear sense of the values that they are looking for in new recruits.

In turn, an increasingly transparent jobs market will enable candidates to find out what working in the organisation is really like. In a company run by authentic leaders, the practical experience of working in the organisation will be closely aligned with way it is presented in the job market.

Attracting candidates with the right values will go a long way to creating a good fit when those people start working there.

1.2.2 DISCRETIONARY EFFORT

In an increasingly complex and high-tech world, those teams and individuals that will create the greatest value for consumers and businesses will be well educated and highly motivated. A highly educated workforce is likely to be self-motivated, wanting to use the full range of their skills in their work. The more highly educated they are, the more confident and independently minded they are likely to be. This presents new challenges to the old outdated view of the workforce – that they are simply there to follow the rules and procedures, hit certain performance targets and quietly do what they are told.

The leadership and management methods that operated for most of the 19th and 20th centuries are unlikely to be working in many organisations in the future. A new model is needed and new leadership is required to meet this challenge.

Organisations which recognise the importance of authenticity and effective leadership are also likely to be able to unlock the “discretionary effort” that their highly educated employees can choose to offer or withhold. This “discretionary effort” is the effort that people offer freely and voluntarily to their organisations, over and above what their contract requires of them. It is discretionary because they have the freedom to decide and it is a choice that they make every day and even moment by moment.

“Winning hearts and minds” is an often-used phrase and it is never more relevant than today. Engaging not just the intellect of employees but also their emotions and winning their commitment is going to be a key way to get a competitive advantage over other organisations.

In a later chapter we will explore what motivates individuals at work and the role that authentic leadership can have in unlocking discretionary effort.

1.2.3 STANDARDS OF CONDUCT

Some of the writing on authentic leadership came about as a reaction to the corporate scandals emerging around the turn of the millennium. It became clear that many organisations gave the outward appearance of success by focusing on short-term numbers to satisfy the requirements of the stock markets and shareholders, driven in the main by performance-based contracts agreed with the chief executive officer and other senior directors. The result was a disconnect between the incentives for senior leaders and the intention behind those original incentives.

The original incentive was there to increase financial performance – creating “shareholder value” as it was called. The assumption was that creating shareholder value came from long-term strategies which increased value for customers.

In a range of high-profile companies, such as Enron, the incentives led to financial engineering for its own sake, making the numbers look better than they actually were, so that the senior executives could receive the financial incentives in their contracts. In the case of Enron, the incentives, originally designed to build shareholder value, in the end destroyed the company completely.

Authentic leadership offers the hope that the senior leaders have the same personal motivations as the organisation and that these are stronger than the temptations of their financial incentives, thus mitigating the temptation to manipulate the figures and engineer unhelpful financial structures.

A business investing in developing authenticity in its leadership team is, in part, choosing to protect against some of these dysfunctional and destructive behaviours. A business that wishes to make an impact on the world, and be there for the long term, is likely to be much better served by authentic leaders who believe in the mission of the organisation. Creating value for customers should lead to profits as a result – and authentic leaders who are committed to providing that value will certainly be “worth their salt”.

Summary:

Organisations may benefit from authentic leadership by:

- attracting people with the right values to work for them
- unlocking discretionary effort from their greatest asset – their people
- protecting themselves from counter-productive incentives and so supporting long-term value creation

1.3 WHY EMPLOYEES MIGHT BE INTERESTED IN AUTHENTIC LEADERSHIP

So far we have looked at authentic leadership from the perspective of a leader and perspective of the organisation. However, as we said in the last section, a business’s most valuable asset is its people.

As we will see in the next section about motivation, many employees want to work for an organisation that is well respected, successful, financially stable and providing them with steady, worthwhile work.

1.3.1 OPPORTUNITIES FOR WORTHWHILE WORK

As with leaders, employees today face the prospect of a very long career ahead of them with the retirement age being pushed later and later. The growth of authentic leadership – and the growth of authentic organisations as a result – should give employees an increased ability to vote with their feet and join businesses that are more closely aligned with their personal values.

Whilst many people may not be primarily driven by their work – but out of necessity have to earn an income using the skills that they have – doing something that is worthwhile and feels meaningful to them should make their extended working life more sustainable and achievable.

1.3.2 PARTICIPATION

A more educated workforce will also have a view on how businesses run, even if they are not aspiring to be senior managers and leaders one day. As transparency increases in organisations, so the distance between junior and senior staff decreases. This is likely to lead to increased dialogue and a more consultative and participative approach which can increase the engagement of a more educated workforce.

1.3.3 TRUST

Working for an authentic leader who walks the talk, who says what they mean and does what they say is likely to gain the respect of much of the workforce, even if they don't agree with or understand all the decisions that are made. In many ways this comes down to the simple notion of trust and we will explore this vital component in a subsequent chapter.

Summary:

Employees may benefit from authentic leadership by:

- having better opportunities for doing worthwhile work
- being more able to participate in decision-making and feeling more connected to leaders
- working for people that they trust

2 WHAT IS AUTHENTIC LEADERSHIP?

Authentic leadership, as the phrase suggests, is made up of two components: authenticity and leadership. So let's explore each of these elements, starting with leadership.

2.1 DEFINING LEADERSHIP

Many books have been written on leadership and what it is. There are a whole range of theories, styles and models. We will just briefly examine it here.

2.1.1 ROLE VS PERSON

The first point to make is that a leader can be a person in a formal leadership role within an organisation or can be someone who exhibits leadership qualities. To put it another way there is a difference between the role and the person. It is possible to be in a leadership role without exhibiting the necessary qualities and behaviours that the organisation needs from its leaders. It is also possible to be providing leadership to others without a formal leadership role.

2.1.2 LEADERS AND FOLLOWERS

Leadership usually suggests a level of seniority in an organisation. It tends to be leaders who set the direction and go on ahead of everyone else, encouraging them to follow along. To put it simply, leaders are leaders because other people are willing to be followers.

In an organisation where the formal structure and hierarchy of the organisation is predetermined and the requirements of each role are fixed, then the followers may be willing or unwilling followers. They may be following because they have no practical alternative: they have little influence in the direction of the organisation or few choices in relation to their own roles.

2.1.3 STRATEGIC DIRECTION

Leaders tend to be the ones that set the overall direction and strategy of the organisation, together with the policies and procedures that need to be followed in order to achieve that strategic objective. They tend to have the ultimate responsibility for what the organisation is going to do and how to go about doing it.

They are therefore dealing with a wide range of uncertainty, problems that have not been encountered before and complex situations with no right answer.

2.1.4 SETTING THE TONE AND SHAPING THE CULTURE

Senior leaders tend to be operating at a level over and above the organisation itself – shaping it with their decisions, actions and behaviours. They set the tone and have a responsibility for creating and nurturing the culture of the organisation.

They will have a great deal of power and influence over the way the organisation develops – their decisions and behaviours influence those around them and this can cascade through the organisation transmitted by other leaders, senior managers and middle managers.

2.1.5 LEADERSHIP VS MANAGEMENT

To aid understanding, leadership is often contrasted with management as a way of highlighting the essential qualities of both and why they are different, complementary and both essential for the effective running of an organisation.

Table 1 shows a simple summary of some of the main differences.

Leadership	Management
Doing the right thing	Doing the thing right
Setting strategy	Implementing strategy
Stimulating change	Maintaining stability
Long term view	Short term view
Inspires followers	Manages work
Hierarchy	Existing direction
Designing	Building

Table 1 Some differences between leadership and management

2.1.6 TRAINING VS DEVELOPMENT

Many leadership training courses in the past have suggested a set range of skills that are needed to be a good leader – for example the ability to think strategically, the ability to communicate effectively with others and to make clear decisions.

Other leadership courses suggest that people model themselves on successful leaders. So for example they may look at other leaders and try and understand their behaviours and actions so that they can model these examples of good leadership.

It has also been said that one way to become successful is to “fake it until you make it”. The trouble is that you can be in a situation where you are “making it” in the external world – with all the success that comes with that and the appreciation of your peers and your boss – but you may still be “faking it” inside.

“Faking it” is essentially the opposite of authentic leadership. In order to fake it you need to develop a separate persona, “the leader”, which you use at work in your leadership role. So like an actor in the theatre you are acting out your leadership role using your persona. You are holding up a mask in front of you, a mask that you’ve created on the basis of what you think is going to be effective in your leadership role.



“Faking it” is essentially the opposite of authentic leadership. In order to fake it you need to develop a separate persona, “the leader”, which you use at work in your leadership role. So like an actor in the theatre you are acting out your leadership role using your persona. You are holding up a mask in front of you, a mask that you’ve created on the basis of what you think is going to be effective in your leadership role.

The challenge with a separate leadership persona is that your colleagues are actually interacting with the persona mask, rather than the real you. The problem for you as an individual is that you have to sustain this persona mask which is not your true self. It can take on a life of its own and require more energy to sustain as it moves further and further away from the real you.

Playing a leadership role using external models to follow and developing a complex persona mask that is not true to yourself, can make life very difficult at times as you have to compromise yourself in order to sustain the persona that you have created.

As Abraham Lincoln said “a house divided against itself cannot stand”.

Many commentators recognise that leadership is something that is **developed** within somebody rather than something that can be **trained** using external models with hard and fast rules. Whilst there are some skills and ways of thinking that can be learnt, and indeed the “fake it until you make it” approach can work for some time, it is clearly not authentic leadership.

2.1.7 CONGRUENT BEHAVIOURS

Much discussion about leadership focuses upon the behaviours of leaders. They say that “actions speak louder than words” and this is often the case in leadership situations.

People tend to notice when a leader says one thing and yet does another thing, or makes a promise which is not fulfilled, or acts and says things that do not align with the company’s values, principles and strategy.

An effective leader tends to act and speak in a congruent manner – i.e. they do what they say. The way they behave and act is in alignment with what they say.

Summary:

Leadership can be viewed and defined in a range of different ways:

- it comes from the way that someone acts and behaves not the role that they hold
- leaders inspire others to follow
- leadership is concerned with long term (strategic) direction and making decisions in the face of uncertainty
- leaders are role models and influence culture through their actions and behaviour
- leadership contrasts with management – leaders do the right thing and managers do things right
- leadership capabilities are developed rather than learnt on a training course
- effective leaders are congruent – their actions and words are in alignment

2.2 DEFINING AUTHENTIC LEADERSHIP

Authentic leadership is about being the true you in your leadership endeavours.

The main difference between authentic leadership and other forms of leadership comes from two elements:

- the leader has a good understanding of their true self
- the leader brings that true self to their leadership role

2.2.1 TRUE SELF

An authentic leader operating in a formal role will be much closer to their true selves than someone who has developed a sophisticated leadership persona or mask for the role. To put it another way, they will be much the same person outside of work as they will be at work. Those who are playing a role at work may be quite different in their home life and their work life.

The word authentic means true or genuine – the real thing. Bringing your true self to a leadership role therefore must mean something that comes from the inside rather than the outside. Instead of creating a set of rules for how the role should be (by adopting elements from their surroundings and creating a persona or mask based on them) they bring their actual self to the role and so the way they behave is arising from within.

Authentic leadership requires leaders to come out from behind the mask, to bring their true selves to work and close the gap between any artificial persona and their real self.

2.2.2 WHOLE SELF

An authentic leader does not just bring their true self to work but also the whole self.

When speaking of the whole self, this particularly means the emotions as well as the rational mind.

For the leader that is using a “fake it until you make it” approach, the mind will have to work overtime to sustain the persona, evaluating what is going on and making a decision about how to act or what to say, despite what they might be feeling or thinking inside.

The authentic leader does not need to be too concerned about conflicts between their emotions and thoughts, as they are likely to be closely aligned to what is required anyway. In addition an authentic leader who is in touch with their emotions is also likely to be more in touch with those of the people around them.

2.2.3 SELF-ACTUALISATION

The psychologist Abraham Maslow developed a “hierarchy of needs” and at the highest level of this hierarchy was the concept of **self-actualisation**. An authentic leader is almost certainly going to be a self-actualised individual, or is on the journey towards self-actualisation.

In order to be a self-actualised individual it is necessary to become self-aware – the individual needs to become aware of what is going on *inside* themselves as well as *outside* themselves.

2.2.4 INTERNAL MOTIVATIONS

An authentic leader is someone whose motivations, in large part, come from within.

In particular their values may be a key driving force at work and they have a sense of purpose which forms the basis for their choices and actions. Authentic leaders have a set of values that are important to them, that they understand and have considered and tested out.

2.2.5 CONSISTENCY

Authentic leaders are able to act in a coherent and congruent way over a period of time – they say similar things over and over again, they make decisions that are based on the same principles and values over a period of time, and so those around them will start to see a level of consistency and predictability.

This does not mean that the decisions are always easy, or welcomed by others, simply that they are consistent and dependable. Authentic leaders are likely to be able to explain the thinking behind their decisions. Decisions are based on a set of clear principles and values – they essentially have a piece of “decision-making software” in their mind, a tool kit, which they use when a decision is required. They apply their toolkit to any given situation and choose to do the “right thing” in that situation.



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2.2.6 MOTIVATED BY THE WORK ITSELF

Authentic leaders have a strong sense of their values and principles and how they want to see those enacted in the world. Consequently they are more likely to see their work as a way of expressing their values and principles and a way to make a difference in the world. In effect an authentic leader uses their work and their leadership role as one of the main means by which they express themselves.

2.2.7 BUILDING TRUST

Authentic leaders tend to be more trusted than their colleagues as they are consistent, can explain their decisions and connect with others on a level playing field of shared values and a shared outlook.

As they bring their emotions to work they can also connect with others with empathy and enthusiasm, particularly when discussing their shared purpose at work.



2.2.8 VALUES NOT EGO

Authentic leadership is driven by values not ego. It is the values and the overarching purpose of the work that is the main motivating factor and not the needs of the ego.

The needs of the ego include external affirmation, positive reinforcement and recognition including through pay, bonuses and similar external factors. Whilst these have their place in motivation, they are not the main driver for authentic leaders.

2.2.9 INTEGRITY

Integrity is another hallmark of authentic leadership. Integrity simply means a lack of compromise and adherence to those core values and principles above all else.

Having integrity means not compromising values and principles for short-term gain, such as financial incentives or other advantages to satisfy the ego.

2.2.10 WORK/LIFE BALANCE

Authentic leadership also offers the possibility of minimising the split highlighted by the debate about the work/life balance. Discussions around work/life balance are usually predicated upon the basis that work and life are two separate things.

For an authentic leader, where the expression of their values and principles primarily comes through their work and leadership role, the distinction is less critical. Instead of work/life balance being a tension between things that drain us and things that we enjoy, work/life balance for an authentic leader does not have the same level of tension, because work is no longer something that drains energy, but instead is something energising. In which case work/life balance becomes less about managing one's energy and more about a time management issue to ensure that there is sufficient time to participate in a range of activities outside of work.

2.2.11 FINANCIAL INCENTIVES

With the main motivation for work being an expression of their values and purpose, the role of financial incentives diminishes. Far from being “compensation” for the work being done, the financial rewards are more about a recognition of the value they have created and the practical need to earn a living.

The level of this remuneration is also likely to be tested through their usual decision-making apparatus of values and principles – for example a value of fairness might be applied to work out what a fair rate of pay might be – not just for themselves but for the rest of their team too.

2.2.12 CONGRUENT

Authentic leaders will speak and behave in much the same way in private as they do in public. As they have dispensed with any persona masks, there is no acting going on in public, consequently there is no separate private individual to shield and so words and actions become congruent.

2.2.13 OUTCOME-FOCUSED

Authentic leaders are very interested in the results of their work – as the work is an expression of what is going on inside, they tend to have a well-formed view of how the world could be and are driven to make that vision a reality.

They tend to be very focused on outcomes in the real world and the significant steps towards them, rather than the short-term gains of this year's bonus or the next promotion. They actually want to see a difference in the world and for things to change rather than simply to find a way to earn a living. They may even go to the extent of putting their own self-interest behind the overarching mission and purpose of their work – however this kind of self-sacrifice is by no means a requirement of authentic leadership!

2.2.14 RESILIENT

As authentic leaders are focused on the long-term and driven by a clear vision, they tend to be able to deal with short-term challenges as they see them in the context of the big picture, giving an increased level of resilience.

2.2.15 CREATING LASTING VALUE

Bill George, who wrote about authentic leadership in 2003, was particularly concerned with how CEOs developed shareholder value. His concern was that many CEOs were driven by their ego (and therefore short-term wins and successes) rather than building long-term shareholder value.

Long-term shareholder value was being destroyed because incentives focused on generating short-term increases in shareholder value. The result was that people focused only on the short-term and found ways to engineer things to increase shareholder value in the short term – or at least the perception of it.

Authentic leaders are more likely to focus on the long term and do the right thing to make a difference in the world, rather than simply to meet short term financial or other metrics.

In short an authentic leader is someone who “walks the talk”.

Summary:

Authentic leadership has a range of hallmarks that set it apart, including:

- self-actualised individuals who bring their true selves to their leadership role
- the use of emotions as well as the mind in their leadership role
- the driving force for their work comes from within
- a consistent approach
- motivated by the work itself
- building trust around shared values
- driven by values not ego
- having integrity and being unwilling to compromise own values
- less of a distinction between work and life
- financial incentives having less impact than internal motivations
- congruence between actions and behaviours, in private and public
- outcome-focused, with a desire to make a difference in the world
- resilient in challenging times by maintaining a long-term focus
- creating lasting value by building for the long term

3 UNDERSTANDING MOTIVATION

3.1 INTRINSIC AND EXTRINSIC MOTIVATION

Since the beginning of the industrial age business owners have been working out how best to motivate their employees to make the most productive – and therefore profitable – business as possible. There have been many theories over the decades and the language has changed and developed as thinking has evolved.

3.1.1 MEASURING ENGAGEMENT

Today, motivation is measured in many organisations using an annual survey which is often called a staff engagement survey. This aims to benchmark and measure how engaged and motivated the workforce is. One of the most significant questions in most of the surveys is something along the lines of “*would you recommend working here to other people?*”. The ultimate test is to take all the factors together, the good and the bad, and to ask if on balance they would put their own reputation on the line by recommending this place as somewhere to work.

These surveys are often structured to pick apart all the elements that could motivate or demotivate, allowing senior leaders to work out an action plan to address the issues raised.

The balance of individual factors in any one organisation is specific to them and the situation in which they find themselves at that particular moment in their history. There are however two basic categories of motivators: extrinsic and intrinsic.

3.1.2 EXTRINSIC MOTIVATORS

Extrinsic motivators are things outside the individual. The most obvious extrinsic motivator is usually considered to be the financial reward or salary that is offered for the role. This could be benchmarked against the market for that sort of role, or the individual employee may compare their salary to their peers or to their own salary in previous years – expecting and hoping to see growth year-on-year and their hard work recognised. It is assumed that financial reward is an incentive for improved performance.

Extrinsic motivation could also include other factors from their working environment, such as the relationships with their manager and co-workers, how difficult it is to travel to work, the amount of holiday and sickness provided for, pension benefits and the physical working environment. It can include a whole range of less obvious things from being as simple as whether their office chair works through to availability of training opportunities and the technology and equipment that they are able to use.

3.1.3 INTRINSIC MOTIVATORS

Intrinsic motivation comes from inside the employee. This is to do with the work itself, rather than their external working environment. The enjoyment and satisfaction of doing interesting work that meets their needs and allows them to be creative and express themselves – whatever that might mean for them at that particular stage in their career – is a motivator in itself. This doesn't necessarily mean easy work, which could become boring, but could include challenging work where people learn more about themselves and develop new skills.

Authentic leadership works on the basis that intrinsic motivation is the key to unlocking the long-term commitment and creativity needed to provide long term value to customers, whilst also enabling the leader to express their true selves.

3.2 THEORIES OF MOTIVATION

With that brief introduction to motivation we will now look in more detail at some of the past thinking, by both management theorists and psychologists, that underpins much of the current thinking around motivation – and indeed has helped give birth to the whole idea of authenticity and leadership.

3.2.1 DOUGLAS MCGREGOR

Douglas McGregor was an American management professor. He proposed that staff could be motivated differently depending upon the attitude that they brought to work. In his 1960 book “The Human Side of Enterprise”, he came up with a theory about two types of employee, theory X and theory Y. Theory X employees generally dislike work and are motivated by external pressure from their managers and the money that they will take home at the end of the day. They are not motivated by the work itself, but by external factors (extrinsic motivation). Managers who assume that their employees are theory X (or who perhaps are theory X themselves) will attempt to motivate their staff through target-setting, close supervision, reward (usually money) and blaming them when things go wrong.

WORK?



NO THANKS!
THEORY X

YES PLEASE!
THEORY Y

Figure 1 McGregor's theories

Theory Y employees on the other hand are motivated by the work itself and derive satisfaction from doing a good job (intrinsic motivation). Managers who have this understanding of their staff are likely to motivate others by giving more challenging work, creating a climate of trust and giving recognition of a job well done.

3.2.2 FREDERICK HERZBERG

Frederick Herzberg was an American psychologist specialising in management and wrote “One More Time, How Do You Motivate Employees?”, published in 1968.

Herzberg proposed that there were factors in the workplace that created employee satisfaction and factors which created dissatisfaction. These he labelled “motivators” and “hygiene factors”. The key point is that hygiene factors do not motivate, but their absence creates dissatisfaction. Their presence does not create satisfaction, i.e. they do not in themselves motivate. Motivators, on the other hand, need to be in place to positively motivate people.

So hygiene factors include things such as working conditions, job security, salary, relationships with the boss and with colleagues. These need to be present and satisfactory otherwise employees will feel demotivated. Money here is not a motivator, but a perceived underpayment is demotivating.

Motivators include things such as the work itself, achievement, recognition, advancement and growth.

3.2.3 CARL JUNG

Carl Jung, was a Swiss psychiatrist in the early 20th century and for a while was a student of Sigmund Freud, the renowned German psychoanalyst. Freud proposed that the main human motivators were buried in the unconscious mind, hidden from conscious awareness.

Carl Jung developed different theories. For Jung the purpose of life was about “individuation” - becoming fully ourselves, a movement towards the ideal of wholeness.

It is this approach which underlies a great deal of personal growth and development – that there is potential in people which can be released and developed. Individuation is neither automatic nor easy, but for Jung it is the core purpose of human life.

3.2.4 ABRAHAM MASLOW

Abraham Maslow was an American psychologist who developed a theory of motivation based on looking at well-developed people, as opposed to the psychologists who generally studied people with psychological issues.

His main theory suggested that there are a range of needs that each person is motivated to meet and this “hierarchy of needs” is a well-documented and much cited model and is usually drawn as a pyramid of needs.

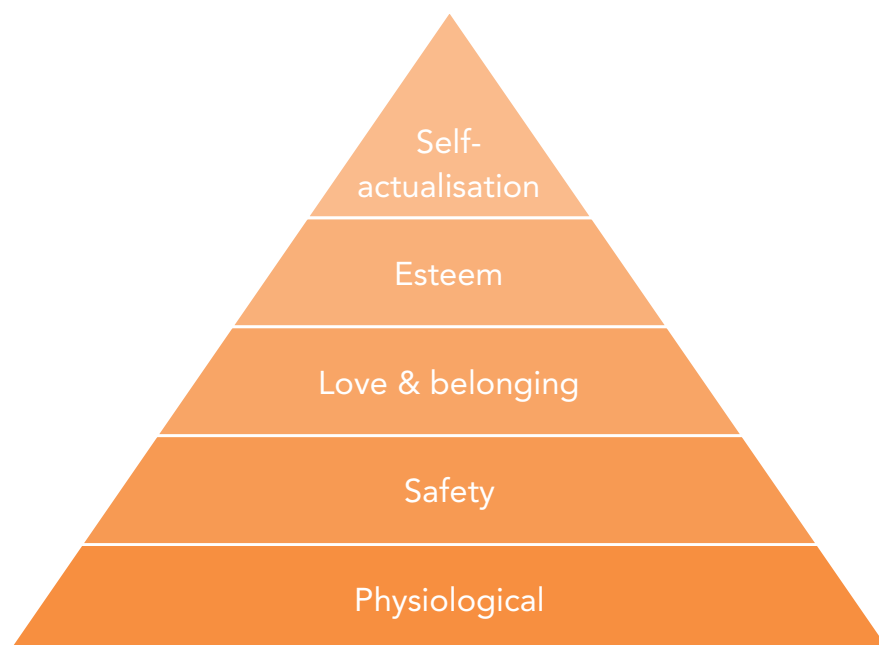


Figure 2 Maslow's hierarchy of needs

The idea is that each person needs to satisfy the most basic needs first before proceeding up the hierarchy. At the lowest, most basic level, people are motivated by *physiological* needs – food, water, shelter and sleep for example. Then they are motivated by safety – the absence of threat. For example this could include being part of a family, having an income and a safe place to live – in Western society this could be more around psychological *safety* than physical safety.

Third comes *love and belonging*, which introduces emotional and inter-personal needs which are absent from the first two levels. This could include building friendships and establishing a family, being in relationship with other individuals and groups. People are motivated to find love and belonging.

Fourth comes *esteem* and self-esteem which derive from achievement or mastery in some form. Esteem from others comes through the recognition received from external achievements. This can lead to desires for fame, status and prestige, perhaps found through a profession or hobby. Self-esteem, or self-respect is derived from the satisfaction of achieving something, like a certain level of competence or knowledge in something. The respect arises internally rather than being dependent upon an external person.

Maslow suggests that when all these needs have been met, then a fifth need arises, the need for *self-actualisation*. This is the idea of becoming oneself fully, to fulfil one's potential and become "everything that one is capable of becoming". How this expresses itself is by definition unique to the individual and could be anything from art to understanding, and from peace to living up to an ideal. This is about what gives meaning and purpose to our lives.

There is much debate about this model and not all needs will sit in this hierarchy for everyone and different societies may experience some of the needs in a different order, but the overall message is clear.

The concept of self-actualisation echoes and is consistent with the work of Jung – individuation and self-actualisation amount to much the same thing. The key point is that what ultimately drives us in life is personal development.

Maslow suggests that the self-actualising person is more integrated, happier and more contented, more able to take responsibility and better able to relate to others.

Maslow was a contemporary of Douglas McGregor and the concept of self-actualisation resonates strongly with McGregor's Theory Y concept.

3.2.5 DANIEL PINK

Daniel Pink is an American writer on behavioural science. In 2009 he wrote the book “Drive: The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us.”

In the book he argued that motivation at works needs an upgrade – the old ideas of building organisations on Theory X have gone and a new Theory I (I for intrinsic motivation) is needed. He breaks down intrinsic motivation into three simple ideas.

Autonomy

The first element is autonomy – being able to work to your own agenda and in your own way rather than strictly under the supervision of another. It is self-directed work and the autonomy can extend to when it is done and even who it is done with.

For example, this could include being able to prioritise your own work on a daily basis, rather than having it prioritised for you, or maybe being able to choose which project to work on or even having the full reign of choice as a senior manager to plan the year’s work as you see fit. It could also mean being able to work from home and set your own hours, and being judged solely on your output rather than the time and effort spent working.

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Mastery

The second element is mastery, that is being good at something meaningful and having a desire to get better at it. If a person feels that they are good at something then they will want to become better and better at it. They feel engaged in their work and see it is as worthwhile.

For example a carpenter may start off working on very simple things and preparing wood for a more experienced master craftsman to finish. They become good at this preparatory work and progress on to a more advanced piece of preparation, which they also become proficient at, so being allowed to do more complex tasks. In time they create their own complete project, such as a whole table or set of chairs and over time they become very proficient in that too. In due course they become a master craftsman which involves intricate designs that are highly complex, technical and creative. The only way to achieve this level of mastery is a solid grounding in the basics and the constant development over many years. With even more experience these highly demanding tasks also become second nature, setting the master craftsman apart from all others until they are seen as a leader in the industry.

Mastery encourages organisations to consider investing in their staff for the long term, to create a development plan with them, enabling them to take the next step in their career, to expand their horizons and take their specialist skills up to the next level.

It is the delicate balance between skill levels and the challenge of the task that makes the work so engaging and leads to mastery. Too simple a task and boredom ensues (the master carpenter becomes bored of producing simple tables) and too complex a task creates anxiety (the junior carpenter being asked to complete an intricate piece of wood-carving).

For the employee, increased levels of mastery means they gain confidence in themselves and their abilities, they get recognition from their peers and superiors and want to use and demonstrate their skills in more complex arenas. Their mindset shifts as they realise that they are a master of their craft. The skill becomes second nature and the work becomes an enjoyable thing in itself.

Purpose

The final element is purpose – and this is of particular interest as we consider authentic leadership. Purpose is the ultimate intrinsic motivation. It represents the bigger narrative that you attach to the work that you do, it is the story that you tell yourself about your work, the impact on others, and on wider society.

In summary, the theory is that doing meaningful work (purpose) that one feels trained and equipped to do to a high level (mastery) and that can be done to suit one's own patterns of work and priorities (autonomy) could be the ultimate intrinsic motivator for many in the workforce today.

These also seem to be the key ingredients for the authentic leader. In general the more senior you are in an organisation, the more autonomy you are likely to have. Most leaders have got to their position by being excellent at their work – a master of their area – and if they are in an organisation that aligns with their values (doing purposeful work) then they have access to all three of Pink's intrinsic motivators.

Summary:

There are a number of theories about motivation in the workplace that are relevant when considering authentic leadership:

- motivation can be either extrinsic (from things outside ourselves) or intrinsic (from things inside ourselves)
- Douglas McGregor suggested two theories of motivation – “Theory X” people who don't want to work and need external incentives and “Theory Y” people who are motivated by the work itself
- Frederick Herzberg suggested that some “hygiene” factors need to be in place if people are not to be demotivated whilst other “motivators” will positively affect their motivation
- Carl Jung suggested that the ultimate goal of human existence is “individuation”- to become fully oneself
- Abraham Maslow created the “hierarchy of needs” with self-actualisation as the highest human need
- Daniel Pink suggested that most motivation in the future will be intrinsic and be driven by three elements: Autonomy, Mastery and Purpose.

4 THE IMPORTANCE OF ALIGNMENT

We now turn to one of the most significant aspects of authentic leadership and its chances of coming to fruition and succeeding – alignment.

4.1 THE CHALLENGE OF ALIGNMENT

A leader can only thrive as an authentic leader if they are working in a company that shares the same basic values and purpose as them as an individual. Trying to become more authentic in your leadership role will be virtually impossible, as a long-term plan, if you are fundamentally at odds with the company's purpose, mission and values.

Being your authentic self in any form of group can be a challenging proposition. In 1930 the psychologist Sigmund Freud stated in his book *Civilization and its Discontents* that “*it is impossible to overlook the extent to which civilization is built upon a renunciation of instinct*”. Whilst this might be a slightly gloomy point of view, the main point is that in order to live together in community, individuals have to give up some of the own desires, goals and instincts. We live in society together because we are all willing to compromise something of what we would otherwise do in order to be able to live together in harmony.

Compromise has to operate in organisations as well as wider society. Our roles are not what we choose them to be, instead they are dictated by what is written in our job description which is designed to serve the needs of the organisation. The job description forms part of the employment contract and we get various benefits (such as our salary) in exchange for doing what the organisation requires us to do.

The challenge for somebody who is in the process of self-actualisation and becoming an authentic leader, is to find an organisation where the aims and objectives of the role and the organisation are as close as possible to those of the individual. That is, authentic leadership is most successful where the values and purpose of the individual closely align with those of the company or organisation.



Figure 3 Alignment

The greater the lack of alignment between the leader's values and those of the organisation, the greater the personal cost to the individual is likely to be, as they have to compromise their values, beliefs and principles on a daily basis.

To have the greatest chance of being in alignment with your company's values, it is important to firstly consider your own values.

4.2 YOUR VALUES

An important step towards becoming an authentic leader, is to become aware of and to test out your values and principles. This is only really an achievable task when you have a certain level of experience and a number of examples to look back at and reflect on. The actual challenges that you face test out who you really are, the choices you make in real life and their consequences. The more challenges and tests that you have had to face, the more your values and principles will have been tested. For those with limited experience there will be less evidence to draw on and so identifying your values will become more about natural instinct and a general feeling of being drawn to certain values and principles, rather than being the result of situations in the real world.

It is real-life experience which helps us to prioritise different values. Quite often the main challenges come from having to make a choice between two principles or values that you regard as important. The situation or challenge that faces you can bring two values into conflict, forcing you to make a choice about which one takes precedent – and why. The decision-making process and the prioritisation of values and principles therefore come from practical experience rather than simply being a theoretical exercise.



Values exercise

This exercise helps you to start thinking about what is important to you – your values. Follow the instructions and refer to Table 1 which lists a number of common values.

1. To start with, place a tick in the box next to each of the values that are important to you. Where possible, identify the values that you have actively prioritised in real life situations by thinking back over past decisions and actions.
2. If there are some values that you thought of that are not listed, then add those to the bottom of the list in the spaces provided.

Acceptance		Honesty		Recognition	
Achievement		Humour		Respect	
Ambition		Independence		Responsibility	
Authenticity		Individuality		Results	
Autonomy		Integrity		Risk-taking	
Beauty		Inventiveness		Reward	
Change		Justice		Security	
Collaboration		Learning		Self-awareness	
Compassion		Mastery		Self-discipline	
Creativity		Objectivity		Self-expression	
Empowerment		Openness		Service	
Excellence		Participation		Success	
Freedom		Partnership		Teamwork	
Friendship		Passion		Tradition	
Fulfilment		Patience		Trust	
Fun		Performance		Understanding	
Harmony		Practicality		Vitality	
Health		Productivity		Wisdom	

3. Now look back at those which you’ve ticked (and any extras that you’ve added) and choose the ones that are **most** important to you – pick at least 3 and try not to pick more than 6. Write them in Table 2 below.

1	
2	
3	
4	
5	
6	

If you are struggling to pick just a few, then think about which ones have been most consistently part of your life, or you have stuck to even when in a pressurised situation. Values that you have stuck to even in the light of external pressures are more likely to be of critical importance to you.

- Over the coming days reflect on the list of values that you have picked – think back to pressurised and stressful situations where these values have been tested, think about your reactions in those situations.

Would you act in the same way again?

Were you happy with how you acted in that situation?

Did you have to compromise any of your values and if so which ones?

Words like honesty and integrity are values that are highly likely to feature in the list of values for an authentic leader as they are at the core of what it means to act authentically. Integrity really means honest, principled – and even incorruptible.

Principles exercise

In addition to the values that you have identified, you will also have established some principles by which you live and in particular some principles that you rely on when making decisions in your leadership role. These are likely to be very closely aligned to your values and could simply be a translation of your values into a more practical and useful principle.

Reflect again on the circumstances and situations where your values have been tested and also think about situations where you were pleased with the leadership qualities and behaviours that you displayed. Are there some principles that you can draw from those situations? For example you may have a principle about consulting other people before making important decisions, in order to gain their different perspectives and views.

You could have a large number of principles that have evolved over time – a kind of “rulebook” for your leadership approach. List out as many principles as you can think of and continue to reflect on this over the coming days and weeks and build up a list of principles. Notice any inconsistencies between your values and principles and think about situations where they have come into conflict.

When you have completed these exercises, sit back and look at the list of values and principles – how does that make you feel and is it missing anything critical?

Would you act in the same way again?

Were you happy with how you acted in that situation?

Did you have to compromise any of your values and if so which ones?

Behaviours exercise

Your values and principles tend to result in a set of behaviours. There will be certain things that you prefer to do as a leader, some things that you do not like doing or prefer not to do, and some things that you will simply never do even under pressure.

Here is another exercise to help you further clarify your values and preferences.

1. In the box below, list out a few behaviours that you strongly prefer in your leadership role. For example “I prefer to consult other people to gain their opinion and perspective on important decisions.”

I prefer to...

2. In the box below, list out a few things that you would **prefer not** to do in your leadership role. For example “I prefer not to make decisions that affect my team without some sort of consultation.”

I prefer not to...

3. This part of the exercise helps you to identify some “red lines” that you will not cross. In the box below, list out a few things that you **would never** do in your leadership role, under any circumstances. For example “I would never lie about financial results”.

I would never...

4. You may now be aware of a few things that you consistently do and are “musts” for you. In the box below, list out a few things you **will always** do in your leadership role. For example “I will always act on the promises that I have made to my colleagues.”

I will always..



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Exploring your values, principles, preferences and boundaries should begin to give you a good insight into your authentic approach to leadership. The next question is whether you are operating in an environment that supports the enactment of these values, principles and behaviours. Do they align with your company's values?

4.3 YOUR COMPANY'S VALUES

Every organisation has a set of values – whether they are written down or not.

Those that do have their values written down may have more than one set of values:

- the ones that are written down and formally approved and
- the ones that are actually operating in the organisation.

In larger organisations – for example those operating in several different countries or those businesses with different divisions – there could easily be different cultures and sub-cultures in different areas, each with their own set of values.

Many large businesses have employed consultants to help them develop and change the company values and culture. Writing down these values – such as “putting the customer first” – is the easy step. The difficult step is to embed those values throughout the organisation and to keep them embedded and reinforced.

The main transmission mechanism of those values – and the culture – are the people within the organisation. People within an organisation are mostly influenced by their direct line manager, their peers and the other people in authority that they see and come into contact with. If the company values only reside in a corporate document and are not being used day after day by senior leaders and middle managers, then it is unlikely that these values will become embedded.

Many organisations therefore have two sets of values:

- **espoused values** are the ones that are written down and formally communicated. In theory these should form the basis of the behaviour and decision-making of the organisation.
- **enacted values** are the ones that are actually alive and being exhibited on a day-to-day basis throughout the organisation. These could be different from the espoused values.

For example, many organisations will talk about “putting the customer first”. This will be an espoused value. However in practice a wide range of things could make it clear that they are actually putting profit first or sales targets first – so managers may only incentivise sales of the most profitable products or investment is put into new IT systems that monitor sales targets rather than systems which would improve the customer experience.

There are many examples of corporate scandals where the espoused values have been undermined by the enacted values. For example, there was the diesel emissions scandal, where car manufacturers needed to produce vehicles to meet lower emissions levels and said that they wanted to do so, but they actually created vehicles which just passed the tests set by the regulations. In an organisation that really wanted to make a positive contribution to the environment by reducing harmful emissions, all those working on the emissions technology would have a high sense of integrity and would not consider creating ways to artificially reduce emissions simply to pass the tests. At best there is a disconnect between senior leaders who are espousing one set of values and the values enacted by the engineers working in the design labs.

For an authentic leader who understands their values and principles, they will need to find an organisation that shares these basic levels of integrity.

4.4 SUFFICIENT ALIGNMENT

It is of course impossible – or at least highly unlikely – that any authentic leader will find an organisation where there is a perfect match between the organisation’s espoused values, their enacted values and the individual’s own core values and principles.

Even in the most highly values-driven organisations there could be a wide range of different approaches operating throughout the organisation, even though most of the staff subscribe to the same over-arching purpose. For example, in a social enterprise or not-for-profit organisation that is set up to make a positive difference in the world, there will still be plenty of disagreements and tensions about the way that the organisation is run.

There will always be some compromise between the individual and the organisation. The best that can be practically hoped for is “sufficient alignment”. This is where the core values and principles can operate and be respected in the organisation and the individual’s red lines (the “I would never...” statements) will be rarely, if ever, challenged.

If there is a significant lack of alignment then the individual is likely to find working there very stressful, having to compromise core values repeatedly, constantly being asked to go against their conscience and undermining their principles. This can easily start with a small compromise here and a half-truth there. This can become a slippery slope as colleagues notice these small compromises and so future requests build up to require a more significant compromise.

A heightened awareness of your own core values and principles will help to raise the alarm when pressure to make small compromises starts to appear. This heightened awareness allows you to make a choice – to consider where a compromise might lead and what alternative choices you have.

In the end, a lack of alignment, if it is significant enough, will lead to only two choices.

Firstly, as you are in a leadership role, you may have sufficient influence, authority and power to change the values and culture of the organisation. If you joined the organisation on the basis of their espoused values, only to find that the enacted values are at significant variance with this, then one option is to remark to colleagues that you are noticing this difference and have a conversation about what is going on. This could lead to a process of revisiting those espoused values, or simply to one of reinvigorating them and embedding them afresh into the organisation.

Secondly, the other option is to accept that the values of the organisation are incompatible with your own. In this case the only thing that you can reasonably do for your own integrity – and probably your long-term health – is to leave the organisation.

Something has to change – you either focus on changing the organisation or you change the organisation you work for.

Sufficient alignment simply means that the values and purpose of the organisation are compatible with your own – i.e. they aligned to such a degree that you can continue to operate within your organisation without too great a personal cost.

Summary:

A leader can only thrive as an authentic leader if they are working in a company that shares their same basic values and purpose. When considering alignment there are a number of issues to be aware of:

- Sigmund Freud said that there was always a compromise between the individual's needs and desires and that of the community.
- There is a level of compromise that individuals have to make when working within organisations if they are to operate effectively.
- A significant lack of alignment will come at a great personal cost to an authentic leader as they are forced to compromise their core values.
- Our real-life experiences illustrate which values we prioritise when any of them are in conflict.
- Our principles evolve over time and become a kind of "rulebook" for our own leadership approach.
- Our values and principles lead to a range of behaviours – and some we prefer more than others.
- We also have "red lines" – those things that we would never do.
- Organisations have "espoused" values which are written down and formally approved and "enacted" values which are the ones actually in operation.
- There is "sufficient alignment" between the values of the organisation and the authentic leader when (a) working there does not come at too high a personal cost and (b) their "red lines" are rarely, if ever, challenged.
- Where there is not sufficient alignment, the authentic leader can either use their power and influence to change the organisation or, in the long term, they will need to leave the organisation.

5 DEVELOPING AUTHENTICITY IN LEADERS

“The privilege of a lifetime is to become who you truly are.”

– Carl Jung

Authentic leadership is not something that can be gained overnight. There is no one-day course that can make someone into an authentic leader. Authentic leadership is not just another goal to be attained or a skill to be learnt – it goes much deeper than that, to the level of our core values and identity.

It is however possible to develop into an authentic leader over time. This process of development requires considerable reflection and an ongoing journey of personal growth and development.

In this section we will explore a range of practical ways to develop your authentic leadership, whilst also noting the barriers to authenticity, together with the benefits and challenges of the journey.

5.1 LEADERSHIP STYLE

There is much discussion in management textbooks about leadership style. Authentic leadership is not a style of leadership – it goes much deeper than merely style – it is your true, natural and individual approach to leadership. Within that true approach you may adopt different styles for different situations, however this is simply an appropriate manifestation of the true you that is appropriate for a particular set of circumstances.

We will briefly explore a range of different leadership styles to illustrate this point.

Daniel Goleman developed a model identifying six styles of leadership:

Commanding – the leader tells people what to do and requires immediate compliance. This can be useful in a crisis or if the other styles have not worked.

Visionary – the leader sells a new direction or vision to people, aiming to inspire them and motivate them to change direction with enthusiasm.

Affiliative – the leader works to create harmony and build relationships within the team, putting people first. This is particularly useful during a stressful time to heal divisions.

Democratic – the leader asks the opinion of the team in order to gain their input and build a consensus – this style uses participation and collaboration as a tool.

Pacesetting – the leader acts with a lot of energy to set the pace and create a sense of urgency to motivate a team to get quick results.

Coaching – the leader supports the development of individuals and encourages them to try new things to improve performance for the long term.

These six leadership styles can all be adopted at different stages and for different purposes. The authentic leader is highly likely, like any other leader, to have a preferred style or range of styles. However none of these styles, by themselves, need compromise the core values of an authentic leader.

At different stages of an organisation's development, an authentic leader may adopt an appropriate range of different leadership styles. For example, after a particularly stressful period for the organisation, they may adopt an *affiliative* approach for a period of time before introducing a new vision and then adopting a *visionary* approach to mobilise people for change. They may then set the pace of change with a *pacesetting* leadership style before finally use a *coaching* style to build the organisation for the long term.

The authenticity of a leader can shine through all of these styles, even though clearly they are likely to have their own preferences and some styles may come more naturally than others. Authentic leadership is not just another leadership style.

Summary:

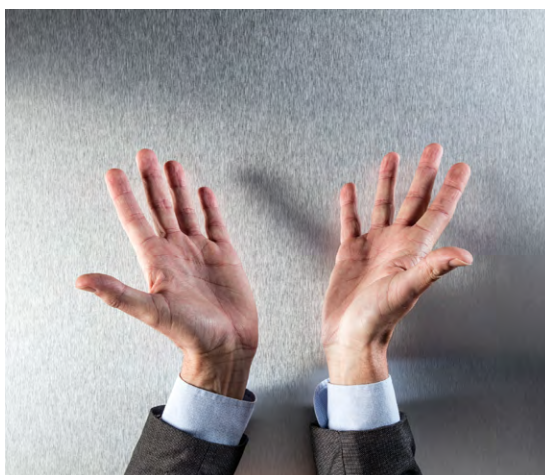
There are a range of different styles of leadership:

- Authentic leadership is not a leadership style, it is fundamentally deeper and relates to identity and core values.
- Authentic leaders can adopt a range of leadership styles, just like any other leader.
- Most people have preferred leadership styles.
- Different styles can be adopted for different situations.
- Daniel Goleman identified six leadership styles: commanding, visionary, affiliative, democratic, pacesetting and coaching.

5.2 TRANSPARENCY

One of the hallmarks of an authentic leader is that they are much the same person in private as they are in public. In principle at least, they would not be too concerned about explaining their private actions and behaviours to a more public audience, such as others in the organisation.

This gives rise to the possibility of very high levels of transparency in an organisation, simply because decisions made in private can easily be explained in public because they are based on the core values of the leader – which are also closely aligned with the core values of the organisation.



One way to consider the degree to which you are acting with integrity and authenticity is whether you would be willing to explain your decisions in public – i.e. how you would feel if you were explaining them to colleagues, friends and family. You might feel proud or ashamed. The decisions might look consistent and considered, or erratic and driven by narrow self-interest. They may have been based on the desire to do the right thing – or merely expedient. Another test is to consider your response to a debate about your actions raging on social media and the extent to which you would be able to give a good basis and rationale for your decisions.

Learning to see yourself and your decisions from the outside can help to raise your levels of self-awareness and highlight inconsistencies, tensions and compromises where your values are in conflict.

Summary:

Transparency is a hallmark of authentic leadership:

- there is no fundamental difference between the authentic leader in private and in public
- actions and decisions made in private can easily be explained in public as the same values are used consistently
- becoming aware of inconsistencies indicates an area of growth for authentic leaders.

5.3 BARRIERS TO AUTHENTICITY

5.3.1 OUR IDENTITY

It is very easy when juggling multiple roles, or intensely living one role over an extended period, for these roles to become our identity. We identify with a role so much that it feels like it is us.

If actors never get to take off the grease paint, then they will inevitably lose touch with themselves and identify more and more with the role that they are playing on stage.



Roles – including leadership roles – can require us to be only a part of ourselves and they may require us to be something that we are not. The more we do things, the more they become a habit. The more that we think in the same way, the more these patterns of thought and behaviour become our identity.

The roles that we play can give us strength and self-confidence. For example, if you play a technical role at work, you may find that people come to you for advice and guidance, they listen to what you say as you're the expert, and your expertise is in demand. Your feelings about yourself – your self-confidence – can come from that role and not from yourself.

This is even more the case when playing a leadership role – people respond to the leader, in part, because the leadership role comes with actual power over other people.

When our identity is derived from these external roles, our true identity gets forgotten and we can believe the lie that we are our roles.

If we get used to wearing a mask of one type or another, interacting in a safe, predictable way with others, we can feel secure and more certain about life. The more that we depend on the masks and the safer that we feel as a result of wearing them, the greater the risk and uncertainty we feel of taking off our mask and interacting openly, honestly and authentically.

A leadership role can become such an important part of a person's identity that it must be preserved at all costs. This is a significant challenge for authentic leadership, because the preservation of the leadership role then becomes of greater importance than adherence to the core values.

5.3.2 THE DESIRE FOR ACCEPTANCE

As Sigmund Freud pointed out, individuals must give up some of their needs and desires if they are to come together to live in society and gain the additional benefits of security, safety etc. that come from civilization. Being accepted by society also becomes a major priority for individuals. The main thing that motivates the vast majority, if not all of us, is to be loved and accepted, firstly by our parents and then, by extension, wider society.

This desire for acceptance creates in us a sort of rule-book of beliefs and values, a sense of right and wrong, of what is acceptable and what is not. They could be helpful beliefs or unhelpful beliefs, true or false. They have been inherited from parents, family, friends, colleagues and society at large. Indeed much of it is neither deliberately, or even consciously taught to us, but is received by osmosis. Long-held beliefs and 'common sense' approaches are talked about in an unquestioned way and adopted as fact by the individual growing up.

Even as adults our desire to be individual conflicts with our desire to be accepted. Often the desire for acceptance wins. However most of the social rules which we need to follow are not written down in law, instead they are contained in an unwritten social code which needs to be discovered throughout life.

In any organisation the desire for acceptance is also very strong. Adapting to the culture of the business leads to acceptance by colleagues.

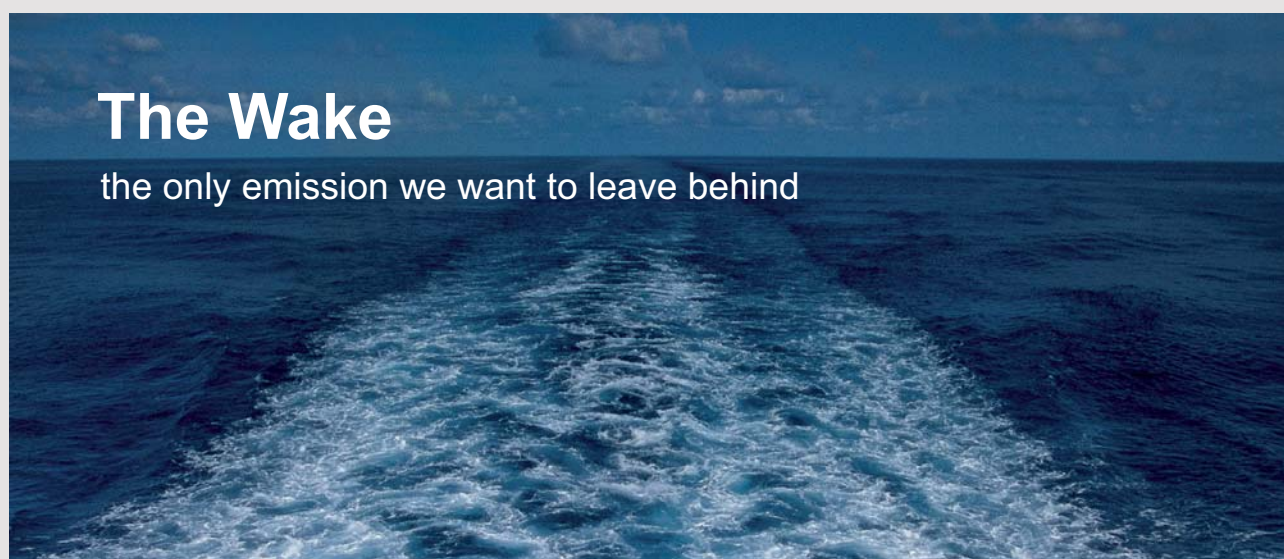
The challenge for authentic leadership is to ensure that the desire for acceptance by colleagues does not become a stronger driving force than staying true to the leader's core values and purpose.

The powerful desire for acceptance, established from the day we were born, leads us to adapt ourselves – our true selves – in order to be accepted by those around us. Understanding this is key for anyone on a journey towards authentic leadership.

5.3.2 HUBRIS

Hubris is a form of pride which overwhelms the individual and clouds their judgement.

Where a leader is surrounded by people that give them positive feedback consistently and attribute successes to them as an individual, the positive levels of reinforcement and recognition can be intoxicating. When a leader accepts these praises and believes that the high level of performance and results were all down to them, a sense of pride – verging on arrogance – can leave them disconnected from the truth.




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Hubris can lead to the individual believing that they have greater powers than the reality. They can end up believing that they can do no wrong.

Positive feedback is an extrinsic motivator which pleases the ego and as such can be very addictive. An authentic leader must not lose touch with their intrinsic motivators i.e. their core values and principles and must keep returning to them – they need to protect themselves from hubris.

In his famous poem, “*If*”, Rudyard Kipling wrote “*If you can meet with Triumph and Disaster And treat those two impostors just the same*”. This is the ability to accept good things and bad things equally and not to identify too strongly with the successes. For the authentic leader this means sticking to the core values and principles and concentrating on making a long-term difference in the world, accepting that success and failure will happen, but not identifying with them.

A degree of humility is a good antidote to hubris. Another way to guard against hubris is to spend time with people outside the working environment who have known you for many years and are unaware of, or are unimpressed by, your successes at work.

5.3.4 CONDITIONING

One of the main barriers to being personally authentic – and therefore an authentic leader – is the conditioning that’s been acquired over a lifetime. This is the random range of values, beliefs and behaviours that has been adopted over time, usually to please other people (i.e. to be accepted by them).

These rules tend to leak out in language with words such as “I should”, “I ought”, or “I must” starting the sentence. This conditioning may or may not be helpful – and it might not be relevant to today’s situations. One thing however is for certain, not being aware of your conditioning, of these hidden rules that drive us, will get in the way of being an authentic leader.

This is one of the main reasons why authentic leadership cannot really be taught but it can be developed.

Developing personal authenticity is really about getting back to the core person. This means stripping away the armour that has been built up to protect ourselves (a collection of learned behaviours and personality traits), and to become aware of, re-evaluate and then discard the conditioning that is no longer helpful to us. This is a unique personal journey that each individual needs to take and it's a lifelong journey.

Authentic leadership is really a process of personal development, rather than a destination to be reached.

Summary:

There are a number of significant barriers to authenticity:

- our identity can become too dependent on our leadership role, leading to our role being more important than our values
- our desire to be accepted by others – including by our colleagues – can lead to the need for acceptance being more important than our values
- hubris can take the focus away from our core purpose and values and positive feedback can become more important than our values
- our conditioning – a range of (largely outdated) rules accumulated over our lifetime – can drive our thoughts and actions instead of our values and principles.

5.4 DEVELOPING PERSONAL AUTHENTICITY

In this section we will explore a few key ways in which personal authenticity can be developed, enabling the individual to bring their authentic self to their leadership role.

5.4.1 SELF-AWARENESS

Self-awareness is the key to much personal development and is a central component of most leadership development courses and theories.

Complete self-awareness is impossible to achieve, as by definition we cannot see ourselves from the outside. However there are a number of things that can be done to limit our blind spots and increase our awareness.

You can become an independent observer of your own internal processes, becoming aware of what your personality is up to, how it is behaving and the impact on yourself and others. This is similar to the role that an executive coach can play in a coaching relationship. In a coaching relationship the coach gives an external perspective on you, in a supportive way and invites you to take that external perspective on yourself as well.



When you are outside the system (where your “self” is the system), then you can be more objective about it. When you are wrapped up in the ongoing demands of the self – the either/or dilemmas of what you should do and what you should not do – then you are not able to take this observer position, which is why having an executive coach can be so useful in helping to develop increased levels of self-awareness.

Self-awareness is gained by this shift in perspective and focus – towards observing your actions and reactions, your thoughts and feelings, to the world around you and the people you are relating to.

Self-awareness enables the authentic leader to respond appropriately in the moment, consciously choosing to be consistent with their core values and principles, rather than simply reacting automatically using the random collection of behaviour patterns acquired through our conditioning.

Being aware in the moment of how your thoughts and emotions are leading you in a certain direction gives you, in that moment of recognition and awareness, the choice of what to do next. Either to continue with the reaction that has started, or to choose a more appropriate course.

Self-awareness is essential for an authentic leader if they are to act consistently and in line with their true selves and core values, rather than reacting automatically from a set of outdated rules.

5.4.2 FEEDBACK

Feedback is essential for any of us to get to the truth – to hear what it is like to experience ourselves from the outside. Even though we may develop good levels of self-awareness, we all inevitably have blind spots – those areas that only others can see.

In organisations there are a range of ways to get feedback. Formally from the annual appraisal, 360° reviews and team-building exercises, and informally from colleagues and other stakeholders such as customers and board members.

The most useful form of feedback is the one that is most readily accepted. The one that is most readily accepted is objective and not value laden – i.e. it is factual feedback, not charged with emotion and it is delivered with the intent to raise awareness, not to criticise or as a put-down.

Feedback is also more likely to be accepted if it has been invited. Choosing to ask for feedback can be a useful way to give people permission to make their views known and to keep you feeling in control. Instead of it being something that is done to you, it becomes something that you have initiated and invited. In a leadership role it can be particularly difficult to get honest feedback, so giving permission and inviting feedback can be very important.

Feedback from peers is also very valuable as it is delivered between two individuals of equal standing in the relationship, and the feedback is not so loaded with the additional authority and weight that comes from seniority.

In an executive coaching relationship an equal relationship has already been established which can transform the process of feedback into a joint process of enquiry, in which each party is exploring in a non-judgemental way.

Often the best bits of feedback, the one that we most readily accept, is the one that we realise for ourselves. As Fritz Perls said “*Truth can be tolerated only if you discover it yourself because then, the pride of discovery makes the truth palatable.*”

Seeking out good quality objective feedback, which is not clouded by value judgements and power imbalances, but is a commentary based on observation, enables the authentic leader to identify blind spots, raise levels of awareness and confirm existing insights.

5.4.3 NOTICING FLOW

It is important not just to notice when things are going wrong, but also to notice when things are going well, in order to validate our understanding of our strengths.

The Hungarian psychologist, Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, named and explored the concept of “flow”. This is the state where you are highly focused on something, where work seems effortless and time becomes irrelevant as you become fully absorbed in your work. It’s when you are “in the zone”.

He said that being in flow is achieved in work when the level of the challenge is matched with the level of skill. Work that is too easy for the skill level creates boredom whilst work that is too challenging for the skill level creates anxiety.

Noticing when you are bored or anxious at work may give useful indications of where there is a mis-match between the challenge you are facing and how equipped you feel you are to deal with it.

Noticing when you are in flow, and recalling those times when you have been in flow in the past, gives you a strong indication of the sort of work and situations when you are playing to your natural strengths, talents and creativity – a sign that you are connecting with your authentic self.

5.4.4 NOTICING INCONSISTENCIES

There are many small situations that occur during normal daily life that can be used to test out or confirm our natural strengths.

Inconsistencies can arise in particular between your thinking and your feeling functions. For example you might be thinking that one course of action is the right thing to do, yet your feelings are telling you something else, or at least are indicating some kind of discomfort.

Your emotions are simply a message from the body – they have no rational way of communicating and so you need to stop and take time out if you want to hear and consider the message behind the emotion.

Feelings and emotions are useful data. When they do not endorse and support your course of action, then there is a rich vein of enquiry to follow and explore further.

Learning to notice the small inconsistencies and discomforts can be used as a learning process, raising your awareness of areas that may require further resolution. It is much easier, and comes at a lower personal cost, to address these inconsistencies with the small things, rather than wait for feelings and emotions to blow up suddenly when big decisions arise. Better to learn and develop when the impact is small, rather than be caught out when the impact is significant.

5.4.5 NOTICING PRIORITIES

Making a decision requires choosing one option over another option and gives a clue to your priorities.

Weighing up the pros and cons of two or more choices may feel easy or hard depending upon the values and principles that we use and apply to the decision. Being unable to make a decision, or unable to make a decision within a reasonable time frame, could be an indication of an internal unresolved tension.

Consider some recent decisions you have made and whether they were easy to make or not. For easy decisions there were probably unambiguous facts and a clear set of values and principles to apply to those facts. Other decisions may have felt more challenging because the facts were incomplete or ambiguous, or maybe it was insufficiently clear which values or principles to apply to them.

Become aware of the decisions that you make, particularly at work. Consider the process that you go through to make those decisions and what information this gives you about your values and priorities.

5.4.6 NOTICING MISALIGNMENT

An authentic leader works best when there is a good alignment between the values and principles of the individual leader and those of the organisation.

Becoming aware that there is a fundamental lack of alignment, is a helpful indicator that your long-term future may not be in this organisation. It is important to realise when it is time to move on – the signs will be there. Increased self-awareness allows you to become aware of this at an earlier stage. For example, boredom may be starting to set in – you may be fed up with going around the same old loop, having the same conversations over and over again with the same unsatisfactory results. Or it may be that you have given all that you can give to this organisation. Your role may have been right for you when you joined, but now it's time to move on.

Becoming aware of your energy levels and enthusiasm for the work and how these are changing over time, enables you to identify when these are reducing and whether it is a temporary blip or part of a trend. Noticing an increasing misalignment can prompt you to start asking the right questions – which could include “is this the right place for me now?”

5.4.7 NOTICING STRENGTHS

Different situations at work will continue to give you new data about yourself, allowing you to notice what you are good at and also to notice what you're not so good at.

An authentic leader knows themselves well – which includes their strengths and their weaknesses.

A greater contribution can be made to a business by developing and enhancing your natural strengths and talents, rather than spending time and energy on trying to develop your weaknesses. Your natural strengths enable you to be more productive, efficient and effective in those particular areas, whilst also making the experience more enjoyable and rewarding.

5.4.8 A JOURNEY OF SELF DISCOVERY

Few of us can see ourselves as the world sees us, so if we take the ancient Greek exhortation “know thyself” seriously, then we will seek out feedback and different perspectives on ourselves and welcome opportunities to learn more about ourselves.

This journey of self discovery can be accelerated by seeking opportunities to get feedback, to take opportunities to try new things, to be involved in new projects – as a result you will grow and develop. As well as the feedback from others you will notice a range of things about yourself as you reflect on the experiences that you have.

One of the other ways to get an external perspective on things is to get external support from someone outside the situation. For example, many people in leadership roles have an external mentor or executive coach – these are people outside the situation who are experienced in working to support an individual’s personal development. They can work with you in a confident, confidential and supportive way, enabling you to reflect on your experiences and integrate your learning.

Summary:

There are a range of ways in which personal authenticity can be developed:

- increased self-awareness – of our thoughts and feelings and of our instinctive and conditioned behaviour – enables greater choice in the moment, enabling the individual to respond rather than to just react
- good quality objective feedback can help identify blind spots, raise levels of awareness and confirm existing insights
- noticing when you are in flow can help identify the elements of work that are important to you and that you are good at
- noticing inconsistencies – i.e. when your thoughts and feelings are giving conflicting signals – can identify further areas for development
- noticing our priorities when making decisions gives additional insight into what we value most
- noticing instances of misalignment between our values and those of the organisation – e.g. where we feel frustrated, lacking in energy or no longer feeling enthusiastic – can prompt a re-appraisal of our future pathway
- noticing your strengths and weaknesses can help guide you towards work that can be productive and rewarding
- seeking out new opportunities can aid growth and development by generating more experiences and feedback
- support from an external mentor or executive coach can help you to reflect on and integrate the learning from this journey of self-discovery.

5.5 BENEFITS OF AUTHENTICITY

There are a wide range of significant benefits to becoming personally authentic – to becoming more fully who we truly are – and bringing that to our work and leadership roles. These are benefits for the individual leader, the people that they work with and the organisations that they are part of.

5.5.1 BUILDING TRUST

One of the most significant benefits of authentic leadership is the potential to generate trust. Almost by definition leaders require followers and followers choose to follow leaders – that choice comes from wanting to follow a leader because they trust them.

Something that is authentic is something that is true or genuine, something that is worthy of trust and can be trusted to be true. An authentic leader is someone worthy of trust because others can see that they are genuine in their approach.

People follow authentic leaders because they know what they are getting – there are few surprises because they lead from a set of values and principles that align with the organisation. They do not change their views and principles on a whim, they do not compromise their core values and principles.

5.5.2 DEALING WITH UNCERTAINTY

With rapid changes in society and the ever-faster development of new technologies that are both innovative and disruptive, we operate in an environment that is in a permanent state of flux and change. Leaders of organisations and businesses have to operate within that fluid environment and deal with the uncertainty that arises.

No one knows what the future holds and yet leaders have to make decisions for the long term. These decisions need to be made on certain assumptions – and leaders need to accept that those decisions could be the wrong call. Knowing and accepting that these could be wrong is part of the battle – you can only make decisions using the information that you have available at the time.

One thing is certain in a world of change – that copying the style and approach of leaders from yesteryear – or even yesterday – is not going to help in an uncertain climate with many possible futures. Those leaders from the past were not facing the same challenges as today. What worked then might not work now and, conversely, what did not work then may work now, if applied appropriately in the current situation.

For an authentic leader the best decision is one that uses their tried-and-tested decision-making apparatus – their values and principles. In a sea of uncertainty these are two key things that you can depend on. They are the anchors in a stormy sea.



5.5.3 DEVELOPING INNER CONFIDENCE

The values and principles of an authentic leader have been described as like having an internal compass. Having an internal compass that indicates the direction to go in can you give a level of certainty and confidence – that whatever situation arises, you can make principled, values-based decisions. This internal compass, coupled with increased self-awareness and self-knowledge, can give a well-developed sense of inner confidence.

When tested with complex situations, you can discuss issues with your colleagues, apply your values and principles and come to the best possible decision, given the circumstances.

Inner confidence really arises from being confident in your values and principles, rather than simply a confidence in yourself and your abilities. That grounding in your values can help banish the feelings of inadequacy and uncertainty that can sometimes arise when the going gets tough.

5.5.4 ENJOYING THE REWARDS OF LEADERSHIP

If self-esteem is largely based on external things like status, money, power and recognition, then it follows that your self-esteem will suffer a significant reduction when any of these elements disappear.

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It may also drive you to cling on to those external things, and this may be at the expense of your core values and principles – and then the bedrock of your authentic leadership will be undermined.

If, however, satisfaction comes from knowing that you are following your authentic path through life, and working in accordance with your values, then the external rewards no longer have such a significant hold on you.

Paradoxically, if you are acting as an authentic leader, building trust and embodying the values and purpose of the organisation that you work for, you are more likely to be building long-term shareholder value, and so are more likely to receive many of those external rewards anyway.

5.5.5 ENHANCED COMMUNICATION

With an enhanced level of self-awareness and a renewed connection with your emotions, your style of communication is likely to be more heartfelt.

The role of the leader is often to “win hearts and minds”, to connect with those around them and to move them to take action. Being in touch with your emotions enables you to connect more freely and deeply with others and to enhance your levels of communication – this is an essential skill for an authentic leader.

Your communications will also be congruent – meaning that the message that you are thinking inside will also be the message that you transmit to those around you, in verbal and non-verbal signals, in words and actions. What you say and think in private will be the same as what you say and think in public – and this honesty will come through as an authentic communication.

Summary:

There are a number of benefits to authenticity:

- by being genuine, authentic leaders can more readily build trust with their teams
- authentic leaders can more readily deal with uncertainty in the outside world as their values and principles form a solid foundation in their internal world
- tried and tested values and principles can act like an internal compass and give increased levels of inner confidence
- operating in an authentic and purpose-driven way brings its own internal rewards, but paradoxically it is also more likely to lead to external rewards as this approach is focussed on building long-term shareholder value
- communication by an authentic leader is likely to be more genuine and heartfelt, connecting more strongly with people and moving them to take action.

5.6 CHALLENGES OF AUTHENTICITY

Being an authentic leader has a wide range of benefits, however it also presents a few particular challenges that require consideration.

5.6.1 MAINTAINING BALANCE

An authentic leader who is in touch with their values and principles and wishes to make a lasting difference in the world through their work, may find it challenging to lead a balanced life.

If the work itself is rewarding, (as it should be if the leader is in alignment with their organisation), then working will be a positive and energising experience. As it no longer feels like “work” it could easily grow and eat into every evening, weekend and holiday.

If that leader is also surrounded by senior colleagues with a similar shared value and purpose, creating a culture of working beyond what is required and driven by a desire to achieve results, then the share of time and energy between work and other aspects of life may become unbalanced.

In the situation where the leadership consistently works longer hours and is highly driven, the wider team will see their actions and choices as a model which, implicitly at least, they should be following. This may lead to a culture of long hours at the expense of family life, health and fitness – which is ultimately unsustainable.

An authentic leader, who is building something for the long term, needs to recognise that the job has to be sustainable, not just for them, but for their colleagues and team as well. There may be certain times when people do need to work longer hours, in order to achieve some short-term results – but this is unsustainable as the norm.

An authentic leader, with a focus on the long term and a highly committed and aligned team, must beware of inadvertently taking advantage of the discretionary effort that the team willingly offers. Having one eye on everyone's working patterns can guard against creating an unsustainable long-hours culture.

5.6.2 MAINTAINING PERSPECTIVE

It is often said that it is “lonely at the top”. For any Chief Executive Officer there can be very few people that they can turn to for support. The reason for this is that virtually everybody that they come into contact with has their own agenda and is not impartial.

Other senior leaders may be looking for direction from them and also possibly vying for their role.

Other managers may be keen to impress the boss and maintain and increase contact with them.

Those outside the organisation who are naturally supportive, such as family and friends, will not understand the context within which the CEO is working.

For the authentic leader there could be the additional challenge that the key people they are surrounded by at work have a similar set of values, making it difficult to gain perspective and to hear alternative points of view. They could become trapped in an “echo chamber”, hindering further growth and development.

It can be difficult to find someone who is objective and outside the situation, but understands the context, whilst also offering the right balance between encouragement and challenge.

The authentic leader will be aware that it is important to maintain perspective and continue on the journey of self-discovery, seeking feedback and support to reflect on the situations and issues they face.

The challenge is to find a few people, or even just one or two people, who can act as a mentor, coach and confidante. Viable options could include an executive coach, experienced mentor or trusted former colleague.

5.6.3 BUILDING FOR THE LONG TERM

Authentic leaders have a long-term focus and will understand that they are in this for the long haul. As their work is marathon, not a sprint, it makes sense to build a wider team to share the load.

Many leaders will choose to develop their *followers*, however an authentic leader, with an eye on the long term, will be particularly interested in growing the next generation of *leaders*.

Developing leaders, with the same set of values and principles, builds a sustainable team for the long-term, all focused around a shared common purpose. Work can then be seen as neither a marathon nor a sprint, but as a relay race, handing the baton on from one generation of leaders to the next.

5.6.4 FINDING THE RIGHT ROLE

As an individual embarks on the journey towards authentic leadership, they can only have a vague awareness of where this may take them. It may take a period of exploration before finding the right role in the right organisation.

To begin with the priority is to find out more about your intrinsic and extrinsic motivators and your strengths – and this involves a degree of trial and error. Taking a role in a new organisation is, effectively, an experiment. It offers the possibility to experience new challenges and situations, to see what happens and how you respond. There is simply no way to replace experience, however experience can be gained more quickly by actively seeking new experiences, opportunities and challenges.

When an individual has gained sufficient experience they will be able to make more informed choices. They will have received feedback which helps identify what they are good at, what they're not so good at and probably what they'll never be good at!

A journey of personal development includes not just increased self-awareness but also greater self-acceptance. This means accepting the things that you are good at, working on some of the things that you could improve and accepting that there are some things which you are unlikely ever to be good at.

There is also a need to learn more about the intrinsic and extrinsic factors that provide motivation. The combination of awareness and acceptance of your strengths and weaknesses and the awareness and understanding of what motivates you, gives you the key ingredients needed to assess the potential fit of a new role in a new organisation.

The right role will of course provide the opportunity to work in an organisation where the core values and principles are sufficiently aligned. It will provide the right balance of intrinsic and extrinsic motivators, as well as the opportunity to use your strengths to full effect.

The diagram below illustrates the zone where the right role can be found – it is anywhere in the shaded area which is bounded by our intrinsic and extrinsic motivators, our strengths and an organisation where there is sufficient alignment of values and purpose.

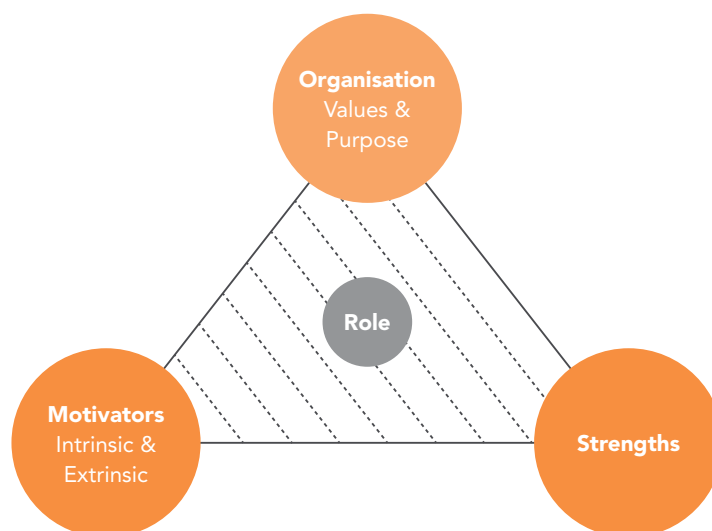


Figure 4 Finding the right role

As time goes on, your intrinsic and extrinsic motivators may change and you may develop additional strengths through practice and experience. As a result the right role or organisation for you at one point in your life may not be the right one at another stage in your life.

Summary:

There are a number of challenges of authenticity including:

- maintaining balance – to ensure that focus on work does not come at the expense of other aspects of life and to ensure that an unsustainable culture of long hours is not building up in the team
- maintaining perspective – it is important to keep perspective by getting support from someone outside of the immediate situation, eg from a coach or mentor
- building for the long term – developing other leaders helps with the current role as well as passing the baton on for the future
- finding the right role that gives the right mix of motivators and strengths can be a challenge and so each new role could be seen as an experiment and a stepping stone.

6 DEVELOPING AUTHENTIC ORGANISATIONS

Understanding authentic leadership requires an understanding of the environment in which authentic leaders operate. The organisations and businesses in which they work and that they lead can themselves be on the journey towards authenticity.

6.1 WHAT IS AN AUTHENTIC ORGANISATION?

An authentic organisation is one in which the espoused values and the enacted values are closely aligned, and where the leadership of the organisation makes consistent decisions and acts in line with their shared values and principles. It will be focused on the long-term, put customers first and have a strong sense of purpose. It will have a clear vision, along with a mission to deliver it and this will be embedded throughout the organisation. The people working there are also likely to be highly motivated and in tune with the organisation's values and purpose, as they will have been attracted to work at the organisation because of what it stands for.

An authentic organisation, like any other organisation, is simply the product of the people, systems and culture working within it. An authentic organisation can only develop because of the authenticity of the people within them – and in particular the leadership. Like any other culture, the tone is set from the top.

Authentic leaders will thrive in an authentic organisation (provided there is sufficient alignment) and at the same time an authentic organisation will only become so if it has authentic leaders throughout. To build an authentic organisation, authentic leaders will need to be visible and communicate regularly with people at all levels.

Effective leaders need to be connected with their organisation and build connections with their team. Management By Walking Around (MBWA) is an approach that first emerged in the 1980s. Instead of sitting hidden away in an office on the top floor of the building, out of sight of the majority of the workforce, MBWA suggests that leaders should be regularly walking through the organisation speaking informally to people, listening to people and generally finding out what is going on in their own organisation. In a large organisation of course, it is impractical to expect this of a few senior leaders, instead this approach needs to cascade through the management levels.

Connecting with people on a practical and emotional level is an investment that often pays dividends. It also gives the authentic leader the opportunity to influence the culture – to share stories that illustrate the values and principles that guide decision-making and form the heart of the organisation's approach. Those conversations will also be about the overriding purpose of the organisation, providing plenty of scope to have meaningful conversations with people at all levels, whatever their role. Many leaders will say that they don't have the time to walk around the organisation talking to people *in addition to* their day job – however the point is that taking the temperature, connecting with and motivating the team is the day job for a leader.

In short, an authentic organisation is a group of people with a set of shared values, united around a common purpose and supported, encouraged and developed by a set of authentic leaders.

6.2 PARTICIPATION

The ability for authentic leaders to have meaningful conversations with people throughout the organisation, based around shared values and purpose, also indicates the likely approach to decision-making that an organisation might take.

With a team united around a common purpose, there will be widespread interest in achieving results and improving performance. Authentic leaders, routinely connecting with other people in the team, are likely to welcome new ideas and different perspectives in order to make more of an impact and improve results.

Authentic leaders, who are driven by purpose and values and not by ego, are unlikely to think that they alone have the best answers – instead they are likely to recognise that they have limited information and areas of weakness where they need input from the team. Putting the mission first means putting the ego second and being willing to listen to ideas and insights wherever they may come from.

An authentic organisation therefore is likely to be both inclusive and participative in its decision-making, as its authentic leaders seek different perspectives and input. They will also understand that their purpose-driven team will want to be consulted, want to feel heard and want to be included. Inclusion and participation also increases the buy-in, ownership and commitment to the decision that is made.

6.3 RECRUITMENT AND INDUCTION

A purpose-driven and values-based organisation will not necessarily attract people with a single set of values and outlook. Whilst diversity is necessary to produce alternative perspectives, a basic level of alignment is important. The authentic organisation needs to pay particular attention to the messages that it sends out during the recruitment process in order to attract the right people.

The induction or on-boarding process is equally important. It is the opportunity to reinforce the values and purpose, to share stories which illustrate them and give an insight into how the organisation operates. It is also an opportunity for new recruits to interact with some of those authentic leaders who are the embodiment of the company's values and culture.

Recruiting the right people is not just good for the organisation, it's good for the new recruits too. People who are values-based and committed to the organisation's purpose, will find their work more meaningful and worthwhile. Inevitably everyone has good days and bad days at work – times when everything is easy and going well and times when things are difficult and frustrating. Where a person feels that the work is worthwhile, they will more easily tolerate the more difficult days. Recruiting the right people into an authentic organisation should lead to a higher degree of engagement and commitment.

Employing people with the right capabilities and values closely aligned with the business, can also enable a much higher degree of autonomy and delegated authority for making decisions. The writer Daniel Pink identified three key elements of intrinsic motivation – autonomy, mastery, and purpose. An increased alignment around values and purpose makes it much easier to increase the levels of autonomy as a similar set of values is being used to make the decisions at a delegated level as they would be at a more senior level.

Summary:

There are a range of hallmarks of authentic organisations including:

- a close alignment between espoused and enacted values
- authentic leaders who stay connected with the wider staff team
- a more participative style of leadership (under normal circumstances)
- recruitment and induction programmes that emphasise values and purpose.

7 CONCLUSION

“Nearly all men can stand adversity, but if you want to test a man’s character, give him power.”

– Abraham Lincoln

Authentic leadership offers the possibility to those in leadership positions to make their role sustainable and congruent and to unlock the discretionary effort of their teams by uniting around a shared purpose.

The journey towards authenticity is, in large part, an inward journey of reflection, coupled with a range of experiments in the real world to create new data. The result is enhanced levels of self-awareness, self-knowledge and self-acceptance, and a renewed sense of purpose and mission. This presents its own challenges – making sure that the focus on the mission is not at the expense of other aspects of life outside work and, perhaps most significantly, finding a role in an organisation that is a good fit – where there is sufficient alignment.

In many ways authentic leadership is not new – Abraham Lincoln noted that the true test of a person is when they are given power. The implication is that this is when the real person – their true character – is more likely to show through. Power could either be used for their own ends and personal gain, or could be used to further a common purpose, driven by a set of core values. Power may or may not corrupt their commitment to doing the right thing.

This book has focused on understanding authentic leadership mainly from the leader’s point of view, how an individual can make the journey towards becoming an authentic leader and some of the benefits, pitfalls and challenges. If a main motivator of an authentic leader is to make an impact on the world and to do that with their team, then the ultimate measure of authentic leadership is sustained results: results in terms of long-term shareholder value or social outcomes but also the resulting impact on the team. The followers’ point of view and their experience of the leader gives clues as to the authenticity of the leader.

If you are embarking on your journey towards authenticity and reviewing your approach to leadership, then keep in mind its ultimate purpose. The purpose of authentic leadership is not as an end in itself, nor simply to make your leadership fulfilling and congruent, but as a means to build effective, sustainable organisations, with motivated teams – and as a result to make a lasting difference in the world.