



agility, flexibility, strength

Authentic Leadership

Do the right thing whilst being yourself

An e-book for Authentic Leaders

Introduction and Background

This e-book has been written to provide supporting information to regarding a piece of PhD research regarding Authentic Leadership within UK organisations. It has been designed to be used in conjunction with a leader's personal 180° or 360° Authentic Leadership Report.

It is suggested that 'Authentic Leadership' is different to other leadership theories such as Situational Leadership or Charismatic Leadership in so much as the focus within Authentic Leadership is on leader self-awareness and ethical decision making.

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1. What is Authentic Leadership?

Authentic Leadership links who you are as a person (your beliefs and values), with how you lead and manage within your organization (your thinking and behaviours).

2. The 4 Aspects of Authentic Leadership

Different theorists conceptualise Authentic Leadership slightly differently. However, all agree that self awareness, self regulation and making the right ethical choices are critical components of it.

These aspects can be conceptualized into a model which links a leader's thoughts; their Self Awareness and their Ethical Virtue, with their subsequent actions; their Self Regulation and their Ethical Actions.

Authentic Leadership is therefore found in the overlap between these 4 aspects. This model is detailed below in Fig. 1

3. The Authentic Leadership Model

Fig. 1



4. How do Authentic Leaders Behave?

Authentic Leaders are congruent in that what they say, and their subsequent actions, are consistent. They “walk their talk”. They “say what they mean and they mean what they say”. And they say it simply.

In a work environment, Authentic Leaders are ethically sound. They are highly principled regarding their ethical integrity and have a reputation for being courageous in the face of what they consider to be unethical decision making on the part of others.

Authentic Leaders take a multi-perspective approach to problem solving and to difficult ethical issues. They are more likely than other leaders to take all stakeholder positions into account when thinking issues through and deciding what to do.

An Authentic Leader use everything that happens around them as an opportunity to learn more about themselves and others. As such, they continually develop their own self-awareness and understanding of others.

5. The Benefits of being an Authentic Leader

Authentic Leaders have a special relationship with their followers; one that is characterised by mutual respect, mutual support and mutual trust.

Authentic Leadership is a leadership multiplier; the actions taken by Authentic Leaders are received more favourably by others. Therefore the impact of their outcomes and their results are significantly increased. Authentic Leadership provides a lens through which all positive leadership outcomes, such as hope and trust are magnified, thereby leading to ‘better’ results.

Authentic Leaders get the best from their people; staff and colleagues are favourably influenced by them and follow their lead willingly.

Authentic Leaders are more successful; they accept themselves for who they are and are happier as a result. They have a congruence that others aspire to.

Authentic Leaders get themselves noticed; they have a higher profile than other leaders at work, regardless of their position in the organisational hierarchy.

Authentic Leaders get results that consistently out-perform their colleagues and other comparable leaders. They do this with an elegance and a humility that inspires others; even when facing challenging times, they consistently act as a role model to colleagues and staff alike.

6. Your personal 360° Authentic Leadership Report

Your report shows “a snapshot in time”. Leadership development programmes assume that leadership style is ‘developable’ and that leaders therefore can change should they chose to do so.

Receiving feedback on your leadership performance in the form of a 180° or a 360° report may be a “call to action”, particularly if the feedback that you receive indicates a significant difference between your perception of your leadership style and that of your staff or colleagues or your managers.

You will notice within your report on page 7 that more than 4 aspects of leadership style are identified and measured.

Along side Self Awareness, Self Regulation, Ethical Virtue and Ethical Action, the other 3 aspects of leadership style detailed in your report are Transparency, Idealism and Narcissism. The PhD research project will identify whether these aspects are positively or negatively correlated with Authentic Leadership. Each of these aspects are briefly summarized for you on page 6 of this ebook.

a) Self Awareness

Understanding one's thoughts, beliefs and values and how these influence one's mental and emotional states. Being aware of the effect that we have on others and understanding how our words and actions may affect others to the extent of having the meta-cognitive capacity to be able to predict one's own thinking processes and subsequent behaviours and those of other people.

b) Self Regulation

The conscious and deliberate control of one's thoughts and those subsequent behaviours that occur as a consequence of one's thinking and self awareness. Actively managing one's physical, emotional and mental states. Taking a multiple perspective approach to problem solving and decision making.

c) Ethical Virtue

One's ethical principles as a leader. One's internal sense of integrity and of what is the 'right' thing to do in any given circumstance. Viewing ethics as a conscious choice rather than a compromise. Believing that one's leadership role includes an ethical responsibility to peers and subordinates and to the wider community.

d) Ethical Actions

Actively displaying ethical integrity in one's resultant decision making and actions that are consistent with one's Ethical Virtue in all professional spheres. Being prepared to share one's ethical stance with others. Displaying ethical courage and being ethically steadfast in the face of dissent from others.

e) Transparency

Being honest with others and telling the truth. Saying what one means, and displaying actions and emotions which are consistent with what has been said. Encouraging others to speak their mind and also be honest. Admitting to one's mistakes.

f) Idealism

Believing the best in people and finding it easy to trust others. Accepting that others are telling the truth. Encouraging others to strive to achieve their goals and dreams. The inherent desire to always achieve a win:win that meets everyone's objectives.

g) Narcissism

Putting oneself first over and above all others. Believing that the "end justifies the means". Being ruthless and finding a way around someone if they get in their way. A lack of compassion and forgiveness. Never forgetting an insult or a slight.

7. Further Reading

Bill George, (2007) True North: Discover your Authentic Leadership. Jossey-Bass, San Francisco

Bill George, et al. Discovering Your Authentic Leadership. Harvard Business Review February 2007, (this article is available in pdf format, please contact Fiona Beddoes-Jones if you would like a copy)

Robert Goffee and Gareth Jones, (2006) Why should anyone be led by you? – What it takes to be an authentic leader. Harvard Business School Press, Boston.

8. Contact information

If you have any queries about this research project or the specific content of your personal report please contact the researcher:

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