

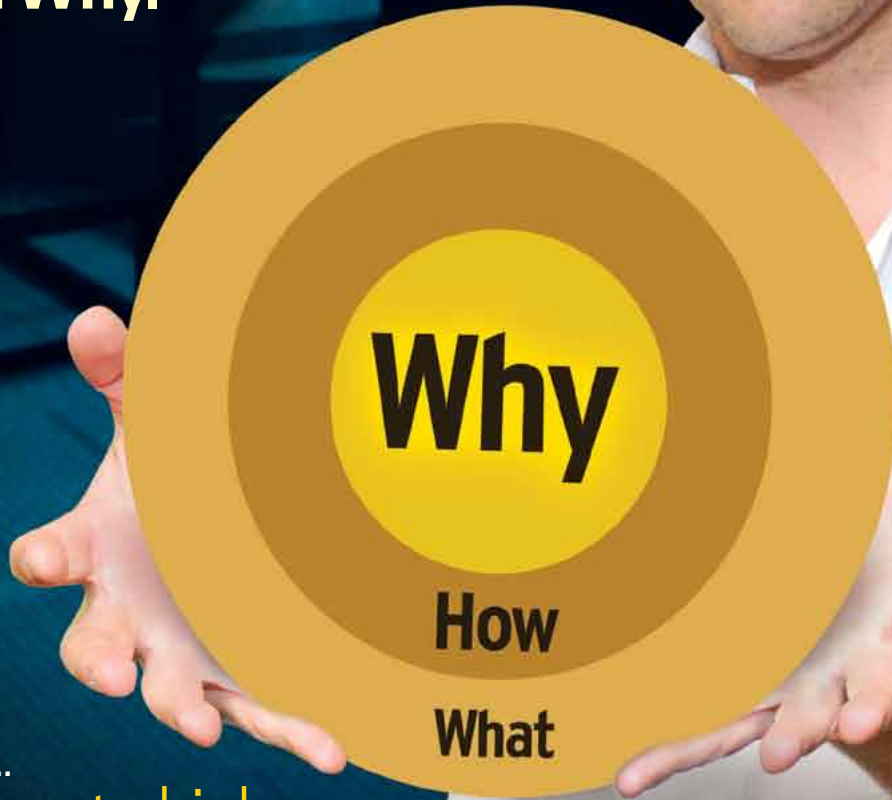
Special Leadership Edition

YOUR WORKPLACE



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INSIDE...

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4 Tips to build a thriving culture

3 Complaints about apathetic bosses

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Be true to who you really are

Authentic Leadership

How this leadership style can positively impact employee performance

» BY CRAIG DOWDEN



“this above all, to thine own self be true”

—William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*

Leaders who exhibit authentic leadership behaviours are significantly more likely to have higher performing employees.

Pressure from employees, stakeholders, and customers can make leaders feel that they need to ‘act out of character’ in order to sustain themselves and their organizations. However, current research suggests that a key-differentiating factor between good and great leaders may be authenticity. Shakespeare’s “to thine own self be true” may be a critical rallying call for current and future leaders.

Distinguishing itself from the more traditional views of leadership, the authentic leadership model elicits the importance of a leader being true to him or her self. When acting from a position of truth to your own beliefs, your actions and behaviour are perceived as authentic and genuine. Engaging in authentic behaviour is proving to be a crucial contributing factor to individual, team and organizational success.

WHAT IS AUTHENTIC LEADERSHIP?

At its core, authentic leadership is composed of four distinct, yet overlapping parts. The power of this model rests not just in its simplicity, but also in its strong intuitive appeal. The elements of authentic leadership include:

1 BALANCED PROCESSING – This relates to the leader’s tendency to seek out and objectively analyze different types and sources of information before deciding on a course of action. Leaders who ask

their followers for ideas and solutions to concerns demonstrate this element of authentic leadership. After gathering information and listening, the leader then acts on information.

2 INTERNALIZED MORAL PERSPECTIVE –

Authentic leaders have also been shown to possess a highly defined moral code that they hold dear. For this reason, these leaders encourage the people they work with to embrace their own values, even if those values may run counter to those of the leader. Authentic leaders, therefore, want those around them to be authentic as well.

3 RELATIONAL TRANSPARENCY –

Leaders who openly discuss their thoughts and feelings achieve high levels of trust and commitment. Employees appreciate such sharing and are more likely to reciprocate. A key advantage of this type of relationship dynamic is that employees will be more comfortable sharing their own shortcomings, concerns or challenges with their leaders. This will allow for problems to be identified earlier in the process, so that they can be managed and dealt with accordingly. There is nothing worse than finding out about a problem at the eleventh hour that could have been easily dealt with in the early stages.

4 SELF-AWARENESS – Self-knowledge has long been lauded as a key for leadership success. Indeed, empirical

research has repeatedly demonstrated that leaders who have greater self-awareness perform at a significantly higher level, and this makes sense. Knowing who we are and, more importantly, how we may come across to others, enables us to manage our words and deeds more appropriately and also adapt to our environment much more effectively. Greater self-awareness also maximizes opportunities for success.

Despite its intuitive appeal, another great characteristic of the model is the growing body of research in support of it. Frequently emerging in academic journals are articles that explore how authentic leaders impact those around them, as well as their organizations. A recent study by Peterson, Walumbwa, Avolio & Hannah published in *The Leadership Quarterly* (June 2012) raises the stakes by exploring the impacts of authentic leadership on an outcome that is of great importance to most organizations: on-the-job performance.

The research team chose to test their hypothesis within two high-stress occupations—police services and the military. Past research has proven that the role of the leader is especially intensified in these environments and, as a result, was thought to be particularly suited to explore the correlation between authentic leadership and on-the-job performance.

The results revealed a strong link between the two does indeed exist. In fact, leaders who exhibit authentic leadership behaviours are significantly more likely to have higher performing employees.

The company Jack Daniel's, has been one of the best performing companies over the past ten years. A major part of their cultural education efforts brings employees from all over the world together for two-days to learn about the history and DNA of the company. The goal as expressed by author, Jim Stengel in his book, *Grow*, "is to ensure that everyone who attends it can forever understand the absolute authenticity of the brand – that a century after the founder's death, the whiskey that bears his name is still being made in the same way by the same kind of people." Stengel goes on to explain that the commitment to authenticity was demonstrated when the company was growing in popularity. In the early days when the demand for Jack Daniel's whiskey far exceeded supply, standards were never compromised to meet demand. Instead employees chose to delay shipments to ensure that every bottle maintained the same level of quality.

POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGICAL CAPITAL

Another interesting finding was that authentic leadership affected performance by enhancing the Positive Psychological Capital (PPC) of employees. PPC relates to whether or not people feel good about the goals they are pursuing; for example, do they feel they have what it takes to succeed?

The capacity of authentic leaders to enhance employee PPC is especially important for encouraging employee engagement. Recent research reported in *Science Daily*, "Nature of Staff Motivation More Complex Than Surveys Reveal", has shown that employees who feel they are overwhelmed by the demands of their job are at a significantly greater risk of becoming disengaged.

By integrating more of yourself into your work, you can maximize the loyalty and capabilities of those around you. When faced with your next challenge, or when considering the potential impact of your leadership actions on your team, remember to be true to yourself, and others, in turn, will be true to you. ■

The commitment to authenticity was demonstrated when the company was growing in popularity. In the early days when the demand for Jack

Daniel's whiskey far exceeded supply, standards were never compromised to meet demand. Instead employees chose to delay

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Above: Jack Daniel's uncompromising corporate ideals keep staff in good spirits and constantly vigilant of their contribution to their top quality product.