The 10th dimension... the power of ten

Dr Ed Bonner and Adrianne Morris discuss the importance of authenticity in leadership

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Life coach Cindy Loughran raises an interesting question: What is authenticity and why is it important to leadership?

Leadership comes from within: it is an ongoing and consistent expression of who we are. Authentic leaders know themselves and their purpose; they use that knowledge as their internal compass. When we align our actions with our sense of purpose, we act authentically; we take a stand, living centreed, calm and powerful lives that inspire others to action. We are in control of our feelings and emotions, rather than letting them control us.

Authenticity is about having personal integrity, being genuine, and acting in a way that is true to you and your beliefs, no matter what. It’s about NOT putting up a facade, NOT being aloof or inaccessible. When making decisions or engaged in discussions, ask yourself ‘What does my authentic self tell me to do?’ Even if it is a difficult decision, check in with yourself and ask, ‘How can I make and communicate it in a way that is an expression of my purpose and in integrity with my values?’

As one begins to use newly learned behaviours, one learns to be generous and forgiving with oneself. The leader who can forgive himself can forgive others. Our sense of another’s authenticity has an enormous impact on whether or not we trust them, how well they are motivated primarily by money, earning six- and seven-figure incomes. Others are motivated by ‘the game’, by winning, and besting others who may be competing for limited corporate resources needed to implement their plans. Typically, these executives reach a place where they burn out, or become increasingly dissatisfied by their day-to-day routines. As a result, their teams suffer and are not as productive, or effective, as they could be.

The best leaders are guided by a deeper purpose – to create a product or service, for example, that delights their customers, or leaves a mark on the world in some way that is meaningful to them. When authentic leaders do this well, they can sustain success and the seven-figure income, along with a genuine feeling of accomplishment, of having made a significant contribution.

Finding meaning

When we clarify our true purpose, we come to understand what gives meaning to the things we do. Our purpose gives us guidance on how to do things. Our purpose guides how we do what we’ve chosen to do. It is our internal compass.

Of course, living on purpose means that you may not ‘fit’ or be successful or happy in every setting. But that’s OK. You will be most successful and make the greatest contribution in the place where you can be your fully genuine, purposeful, authentic self.

So, how do you become an authentic leader?

1. Know the leader you want to be.
2. Clarify your purpose.
3. Create a vision for yourself as an authentic leader.
4. Identify your deepest values.
5. Think about leaders you admire. What is it about them you want to emulate?
6. What is the legacy you want to leave? Picture how it looks and feels to be the best, most authentic leader you can be.
7. Know your strengths and weaknesses. Especially in this fast paced, global, technological world, we can’t be experts in everything. Nor do we necessarily want or have time to be.
8. Be honest about what you can do well and enjoy doing and what is best left to others.
9. Identify the gaps between your vision and current reality. Determine which gaps you want to close by learning and growing your own expertise and which ones you want to fill with the talents of others. Identify sources and opportunities for development. Pursue them with a beginner’s mind. Enjoy the learning process.
10. Create visual cues (Post-It notes, special screen savers, mantras) to remind yourself to be your newly-discovered real self when self-doubt begins to creep in.

Standing out as an authentic leader

‘Authenticity is having personal integrity, being genuine, and acting in a way that is true to you and your beliefs, no matter what’

Dr Ed Bonner

*Reference: Cindy Loughran http://www.newleaftouchstone.com