



TOP TIPS FOR LEADING WITH AUTHENTICITY

WHAT DOES AUTHENTIC LEADERSHIP MEAN?

Authentic leadership involves the alignment of thoughts, words and actions, and leading with both integrity and transparency. This leadership style prioritises meaningful workplace relationships and facilitates trust, loyalty and cohesion - all qualities integral to building strong, cohesive and thriving teams. In the long run, authentic leadership can boost employee morale, company productivity and uplift the entire corporate culture.

WHAT ARE THE KEY COMPONENTS OF AUTHENTIC LEADERSHIP?

1. SELF- AWARENESS

Authentic leaders have emotional intelligence, have the capacity to reflect and are aware of their own strengths and weaknesses. This includes being able to self-regulate and manage emotions. One way of demonstrating self-awareness is to seek feedback from the rest of their team on their working style and implement any reasonable changes that could facilitate better teamwork.

2. RELATIONAL TRANSPARENCY

Another aspect of authentic leadership involves being open and honest in their work relationships. This can be shown by giving fair and constructive feedback to team members, whilst also having the emotional maturity to take accountability for their own actions.

3. BALANCED PROCESSING

When it comes to decision-making, authentic leaders consider different points of view and seek input from other team members. Fair processing enables employees at all levels to be given the opportunity to share their points of view in a collaborative manner and as a result feel respected and valued. A key step to achieving this is to create psychological safety, so that team members are given the opportunity to express their thoughts, suggestions and concerns, without fear of negative consequences.

4. STRONG MORAL CODE

Authentic leaders know what their core values are and use them as a clear frame of reference to lead. This involves advocating for causes that they believe in and having the courage to influence other leaders to drive change.

STARTER PACK FOR AUTHENTIC LEADERSHIP

- **Practise self-awareness** - ask for and be open to constructive feedback, commit to personal development and take on leadership training if lacking in management experience
- **Role-model** - lead by example and build trustworthiness by following through on commitments and promises
- **Strengthen communication skills** - practise active listening, clear and effective communication
- **Identify your values** – knowing and standing by your values to lead with a clear vision
- **Find a mentor** - seek guidance from a more experienced leader in your business sector to provide feedback and support

BALANCING CORPORATE PRIORITIES WITH AUTHENTIC LEADERSHIP

1. REFRAIN FROM SUGAR COATING

Balancing financial results, being a good leader and attempting to strive for work-life balance seem like incompatible pressures. Part of managing this tension is to be authentic in the communications to employees around challenging periods or tough deadlines. This helps to alleviate uncertainty for employees, which is a big contributing factor towards poor mental health at work. Ensure that these periods of intensive hard work are then recognised and compensated for fairly at a later stage.

2. PRACTISE AUTHENTICITY AT COMPANY LEVEL

While company policies may be helpful starting points to drive cultural change within an organisation, real change comes from effective implementation and uptake of these policies. This is an example of authenticity expressed at a company level - aligning what is being communicated to what is really being done.

3. FIND ALLIES

For authentic leadership to cascade throughout the organisation, other senior leaders also need to be willing to participate and commit to change. This ripple effect can begin by having a few leaders normalise conversations around mental health, speak up on the benefits of authentic leadership and lead by example.

IMPORTANCE OF SELF-CARE FOR LEADERS

While there are many benefits of authentic leadership, empathetic leaders tend to look after the needs of others at the expense of their own. Practising self-care enables an individual to bring their best and whole self to work. It has a direct impact on decision-making, productivity and creativity. Try to prioritise self-care practices in your daily routine.

True sustainable leadership needs to be nurtured and leaders should commit to practising self-care while they look after the wellbeing of the team. By role-modelling boundary-setting and self-care behaviours, leaders encourage the rest of the team to follow suit. Role-modelling also includes building team cohesion by supporting the team as a whole, rather than focusing on individual tasks.

RESOURCES

[Harvard Business School – Authentic Leadership: What it is and why it's important](#)

[Center for Creative Leadership – Authentic Leadership: What It Is, Why It Matters](#)

[Forbes - Authenticity: The Key To Great Leadership and How To Embrace It](#)

[Emeritus - What is Authentic Leadership and What Are Its Benefits?](#)

[Indeed – What is Authentic Leadership? Its Components and Practice](#)



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**City Mental Health
Alliance** HK

The City Mental Health Alliance Hong Kong (CMHA HK) is a not-for-profit membership organisation. We are an alliance of businesses, working together with mental health experts and partner organisations, to achieve our vision that every workplace will protect, support and create positive mental health for their people.

We provide training, events, resources, research and practical support for companies wishing to create mentally healthy workplaces.

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