

A CRITICAL ANALYSIS INTO THE EMERGENCE OF AUTHENTIC LEADERSHIP AND ITS IMPLICATIONS UPON ORGANIZATIONS

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Abstract

Leadership entails creating an environment in which people feel safe and empowered enough to express unpopular opinions without fear of repercussions. The purpose of this paper is to explore about authentic leadership, its meaning, the process of becoming authentic, the impact of authenticity, the circumstances where the leaders not be too authentic, and why certain habits are not necessary for good leadership. The author considered heavily secondary data in formulization of the philosophy including certain surveys, reports, interviews conducted by prominent entities, and his personal past work experiences in terms of case study, adjoining the Indian Hindu mythology, too to provide a better perspective that revolves around authenticity and its significance. Despite the fact that authenticity fosters healthier and stronger connections with customers, people, investors, vendors, and other ecosystem stakeholders, the participants identified specific personality characteristics (such as sarcasm or anger) as the leading causes of workplace unhappiness. It is not worth devoting energy to continually self-monitoring one's (leader's) own behaviour in order to ensure that it is under control. When someone attempts to be completely authentic, there is a dark side. Authentic leadership can sometimes be awful leadership. The paper maintains that authentic leadership is all about enabling and empowering the people around. Before being authentic, it is pertinent to think of the motivations for disclosures; whether the leader has authority to talk about the subject matter; whether the leader is meaningful by sharing such facts.

Key Words: Authentic Leadership; Modern Management Science; Employee Experience; Employee Empowerment; Break the Rule.

Objectives of the study

The author explored to figure out the answers to find out what each of the following is meant for:

1. What does authentic leadership mean?
2. What is the right amount of information to reveal while being authentic?
3. What kind of impact the authenticity has upon organizations through its authentic leaders?
4. How does a leader demonstrate appropriate authenticity to be successful in the workplace?
5. Does an authentic leader have *carta blanche* to reveal everything to be truthful?

Literature Review

The term was coined by Bill George, a professor at Harvard Business School, and his worldwide bestseller was *Authentic Leadership* (2003). The authenticity of George's leadership role is that the person must be authentic — a true reflection of his/her own basic views and values, rather than a carbon copy of another's leadership persona. Most of the leaders tend to work differently. Every leader attempts to be one way at work, while their true personality emerges the other way outside of work. Leadership seems to be acting. Sometimes people leave the leaders to work somewhere else because of the leadership style and the leaders do not realize why the people leave them and the organization. From Greek philosophers to Shakespeare ("To thy own self be true." –Polonius, *Hamlet*, 2022) (Shakespeare, 2022), authenticity has been studied throughout history. Authentic leadership has been studied sporadically as part of modern management science, but the question of what is authentic leadership has reached new heights since Bill George's 2003 book, *Authentic Leadership*.

Organizations and the leaders must, sometimes, allow the team members to commit mistakes only through which innovation happens (Tallon, 2016). People make errors. In fact, we only learn by making mistakes. Mistakes enable us to learn new things. People learn from our mistakes. However, mistakes are costly for businesses. That is not permitted in a competitive and profit-driven ecosystem. In fact, forgiveness is regarded as a sign of weakness and favoritism. If the team does not make any mistakes for an extended period of time, it indicates that they are not trying new things and are operating within their comfort zone (Tiwari, 1999).

Making mistakes is the path to great ideas and innovation. Mistakes are contributing factors to moving beyond one's comfort zone and into the growing zone, where new discoveries and great lessons are made. Mistakes are not failures; they are simply the process of removing methods that will not work in order to get closer to methods that will (Anderson, 2013).

Authenticity does not always fall into the category of only leaders but also the team members. There could also be authentic team members, and they would probably in due course emerge as authentic leaders. Usually, in the workplaces, the people manage their behaviours, emotions in accordance with the way they are perceived by their peers for the reason they don't want to risk hurting their feelings, relations, reputation and credibility. Thereby, the true selves of who they are is not revealed. As part of the research, Plasticity Labs and Dr. Anne Wilson, a social psychologist at Wilfrid Laurier University jointly conducted a survey to investigate the consequences for job authenticity and to investigate the benefits of authenticity, how the working environment and norms contribute to authenticity, and the underlying mechanisms relating authenticity and workplace well-being. The researchers employed a combination of quantitative and qualitative methodologies. A total of 213 employees responded to the survey about workplace authenticity, workplace characteristics such as dress code, and workplace mood such as job happiness, engagement, and feeling of community, among other topics.

According to one study, the more authentic employees feel, the higher their job happiness, engagement, and self-reported performance are. The key, the author believes, is to strike a balance that allows people to be true to themselves while also flourishing and succeeding at work

Authentic Leadership – a case study in the Indian context

People tend to run around the subject of power in management, failing to realise how the animal impulse to dominate frequently devastates even the best-intentioned businesses. Regardless, power, on the other hand, is a crucial tool that influences how an idea is implemented.

The author refers to and compares the dimensions of leadership in current business to Indian Hindu mythology. The human ability to see the quest for power is known as *divya-drishti*, according to the study. Plants can't get away from creatures that eat them, yet animals may run away from predators. The prey lives in constant terror of being ambushed by the predator, never knowing when it will be trapped. It, on the other hand, never considers seeking outside assistance. Humans, on the other hand, are always seeking outside assistance and feel entitled to it. Humans seek protection from exploitation by building a fence, fort, or 'durg.' Durga, the goddess of power, is derived from Durg. Durga must be distinguished from Shakti, the inner power – physical and mental prowess – that every living creature possesses. Durga is the goddess of external power, which is manifested in tools, technology, laws, titles, and property, and which offers leadership, social prestige, and a place in the organisational hierarchy where they feel safe, regardless of their physical or mental abilities.

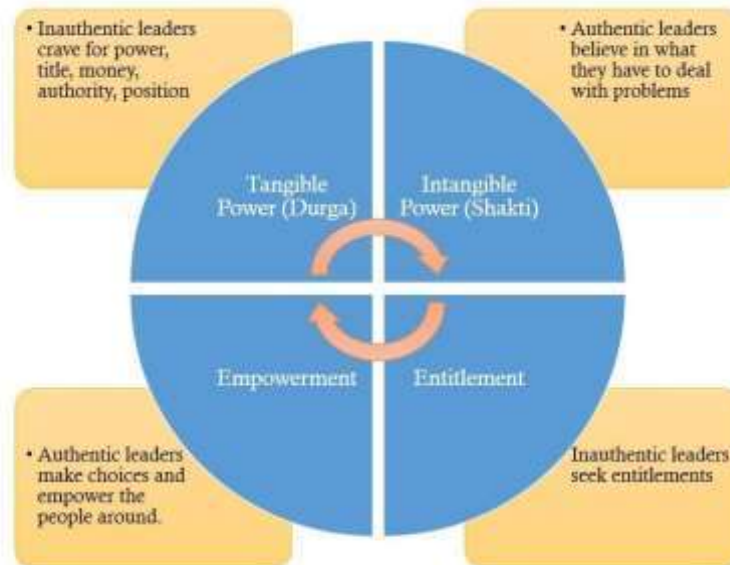


Figure-1: Thematic Representation of Authentic Leadership & Possible Transformation

The lion signifies a leader’s innate tendency to dominate, be aggressive, and defend his/her territory. Tapasya is the only way to evoke Shakti, which cannot be given or taken. During a yagna, Durga can be given or taken: a leader can be empowered or disempowered based on societal institutions. A deficiency of Shakti is reflected in a desire for Durga. Durga makes up for the lack of Shakti. The desire for Durga lessens as Shakti is evoked. (Pattanaik, 2016).

With some introspection, the author compiled some of his previous job experiences and formalized some of the real- time use cases. In his experience, he has seen heads of departments in his organizations urge their team members to quit because they have broken or breached the regulations. The context is: the product support team was told by the organization, let's say ABC Product Company, not to help the client, let's say XYZ Bank because they hadn't paid their outstanding debts. Everyone in the company, including the CEO, stopped answering calls from XYZ Bank and refused to provide service. However, one team leader did not want his customer to be inconvenienced, so he extended support and urged his team members to do the same without causing any inconvenience to the end-users, who are the client's ultimate benefactors. Between this squad and that XYZ Bank, there existed a gentleman's agreement. After a few months, ABC Product Company has acquired a new client-bank, and they are going to sign the contract pending receipt of a testimonial for the same product/service from one of their clients, who happens to be the XYZ Bank.

Now is the time for ABC Product Company to receive the XYZ Bank's recommendation. Everyone in the company approached the XYZ Bank's management, including the CEO, but they declined the request due to their lack of cooperation. The ABC Product Company was unable to sign the contract due to a lack of testimonials. The CEO believed that he could obtain the testimonial and that it was critical to acquiring this client, based on which 25 other banks are waiting to join the flow, and that there would be an increase in top sales revenue/volume of business of INR 850 Cr. Surprisingly, the team leader, who had been providing support along with his direct reportees, came forward and assured the company that the testimony would be obtained. As a result, he received a favourable testimonial and was instrumental in obtaining the large deal. In this case, the team leader broke the rule and went ahead and extended his support because he had a strong intuition that it would benefit him and the organization at some point; the team leader has a sense of ownership and pride in what he was doing, and what he believes is for the good of the company beyond certain boundaries. If he had taken the stance of the entire company, it would not have been possible to sign the contract. In this case, he always put the customer's interests first, and he believed that providing a positive customer experience was the best way to achieve success. He demonstrated himself to be an authentic leader by acting following his intuition.

Research Methodology

The author chose the qualitative research method for it is used to describe a phenomena – a behavioural approach. On the other hand, it is concerned with qualitative phenomena, such as those involving or pertaining to quality or kind of a leadership (C.R.Kothari, 2019). The author looked into the causes for human behaviour i.e., why leaders think or did particular things or displayed and demonstrated the leadership the way did. It also referred to 'motivation study,' and hence a sort of qualitative research. The goal of this study has been to figure out what drove leaders the way they display the authentic leadership, which is the subject matter of the study motivations, and how did it affect the people at workplaces.

Research Design

As far as research design is concerned, the overall design is a flexible design providing an opportunity for considering different aspects of the problem. For this study, the sampling design is of a non-probability sampling design, which is purposive/judgmental sampling. As it is an observational study, unstructured instruments have been used for data collection.

Data Analysis

Being authentic, the leaders can bring to the organization the following:

- a. Inspiration and motivation
- b. Capacity to build a culture of openness and trust
- c. Ability to boost performance and increase productivity
- d. Employee engagement and well-being
- e. Moral and ethical standards

To become authentic, it is indispensable for the leaders to develop inner strength, the Shakti, rather craving for titles, powers, authority, prominent place/cabins, and vehicles. Leaders frequently connect themselves with power and urge to rule, but the objective of leadership is to be confident enough to let go of their desire for power, and empower the people around them. It seems possible only when they overcome their anxiety, and start influencing with great conviction proving their view point for a mutually beneficial coexistence but not with authority.

In the survey conducted by Plasticity Labs and Dr. Anne Wilson Overall, 72 percent of the respondents stated they are genuine at work, and it takes them an average of two to three months for doing so. By three months, 60% of this group had shown to be genuine, and 22% had proven to be genuine by nine months. For 9% of respondents, it took 10–12 months to feel comfortable being true to themselves. Another 9% said it took them more than a year to reveal their true selves at work. Employees differed in their willingness to expose their genuine selves, and those who stated it took longer to reveal their true selves continued to report sharing less of their true selves even after additional time had gone.

The author also looked at the hypothesis that employees who claimed to be genuine would have a better work experience. Overall, authentic employees outperformed inauthentic employees, expressing much higher job satisfaction and engagement, as well as more enjoyment at work, a stronger feeling of community, more inspiration, and less workplace stress. The extent to which employees disclose their genuine selves at work is connected to their working experience: the more of themselves they share with others, the better their workplace experience.

After all, being authentic does not entitle a leader to divulge everything or communicate anything he or she can, which is a key aspect that may be debated. A leader can't say how tough it is for him or her to –

- i. Interact with the Board of Directors;
- ii. Express his/her frustrations on the team for failing to complete the project on time
- iii. Persuade the team despite lack of trust in the structure, policy, and culture.

As a result, it's sometimes best not to be too genuine in order to protect the company's and leadership team's reputations.

- i. By sharing this, how am I assisting someone else?
- ii. Is there any possibility I may harm someone else by sharing this?
- iii. Do I have the authority to talk on this subject?
- iv. What are my motivations for disclosing this information about myself, you, or someone or anything else?
- v. How does my entity most deserve from me as a leader right now?

Key Findings and Discussions

People are seen to accomplish their jobs and carry out day-to-day operations as told by their leaders simply because they have authority. They are authoritative. They are neither "followed" or "admired" by these individuals. People like leaders that prioritize their team's interests and well-being before their own. When leaders show their genuine characteristics, people are more likely to follow and support them.

Although the findings demonstrate a significant correlation between authenticity and well-being, they do not reveal what employees truly believe about the importance of authenticity. To answer this issue, the researchers who conducted survey polled employees on their perspectives on how authenticity influences workplace culture. The significant majority (80 percent) of employees who reported being real stated that it improved the workplace. The feedback received from them touched on a few important themes: Being honest boosts productivity, performance, and success while requiring people to use less energy and time censoring or disguising themselves. Employees did, in fact, frequently connect these themes: Spending less time and energy on self-monitoring allowed to devote more time and attention to the work at hand.

Employees also feel that being authentic builds healthier and better relationships with customers and other employees because it fosters more trust and understanding. Finally, they claimed that authenticity promotes to a more happy work atmosphere. Although the majority of individuals feel that being real increases productivity and fosters a healthy work atmosphere, a minority percentage of employees (10%) say that some of the consequences of being authentic are negative. It is found that personality conflicts or traits (such as sarcasm or aggressiveness) were not appreciated or misconstrued by others and they were considered as the primary causes for the unrest in the workplaces, according to the participants.

According to the research, being true to oneself empowers individuals in the workplace by encouraging emotions of control and mastery, which leads to higher job satisfaction and happiness. This is a critical aspect since work satisfaction and engagement require a sense of empowerment. Employees at all levels might feel more empowered if leaders foster authenticity in the workplace.

Businesses are frequently urged to search for the optimal "fit" when recruiting new employees, however it can be difficult for people to be truthful even if they do not "fit" with fellow coworkers due to differences in temperament, values, behaviors, or perspectives. While disagreements may stimulate progress and innovation, major variances may cause some employees to adopt a professional persona. This is an issue that will require further investigation - how much heterogeneity among people is too much? As this is an exploratory study, the interpretation of exploratory research findings frequently results in hypotheses for experimental research, and thus interpretation is involved in the transition from exploratory to experimental research.

Encouragement of authenticity, of course, does not mean dogmatic commitment to a single "real self." People are multi - faceted: People may express themselves differently at home and in the workplace, yet both manifestations may be congruent with their genuine selves. As workers, they should question if they express their genuine selves in the same manner at home and at work, rather than whether our self-expressions at both places reflect who they truly are.

Conclusion

One strategy that businesses can take to establish a safe environment for leaders to be themselves is to urge the leaders to be truthful. Authentic leaders are to be real and honest, accept mistakes, and stick to their convictions. When leaders are honest with themselves and recognize their faults or failings, it allows others to do the same. It ensures shifting the workplace standards for the better. However, leaders must also embrace sincerity from their team members. Creating an open-minded, tolerant atmosphere that encourages different points of view and beliefs will lay the groundwork for a genuine workplace. Employees should be able to articulate themselves rather than merely follow the herd, because variations in perspectives can lead to inventive, novel solutions.

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