

MANAGEMENT CORNER

THE COURAGE TO LEAD – PART II



By Fiona Beddoes-Jones*

In our previous issue, Fiona Beddoes-Jones explored the meaning of Authentic Leadership, the role of courage and its importance to the organisation in defining leadership style, culture and behaviour in facing up to a complex and sometimes difficult and contradictory business environment. In order to lead, leaders have to make decisions. To be effective, decisions must engender confidence in followers and motivate them to execute them. How that confidence and motivation might be created is therefore a crucial success factor in the organisation's governance structures. In the second of two articles, Fiona Beddoes-Jones continues to explain what being authentic implies, how Authentic Leadership influences your behaviour and how you can develop Authentic Leadership within yourself and within your organisation.

Authentic Leadership is all about you

■ In case you don't have the previous article to hand, as a reminder, Authentic Leadership links who you are as a person, the sum total of your experience, your personality, your beliefs and your values, with how you lead and manage, i.e. how you relate to colleagues and followers in terms of your thinking and your subsequent actions.

Leadership is commonly a by-word for "the executive" or the grouping of

executives in "the C-suite", seemingly abdicating all others from any leadership responsibility. Actually, leadership, hence Authentic Leadership included, takes place at multiple levels within an organisation – in fact, anywhere, anytime a decision taken influences outcome in terms of performance or the actions of colleagues. Authentic Leadership naturally occurs at the individual leadership level, however it also occurs at the followership levels within individuals and teams, and strategically, at the organisational,

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cultural, level. The manner in which we choose to exercise leadership therefore, should not be a haphazard affair. We need to choose our leadership style – our culture of leadership – our tone at the top.

Defining Authenticity

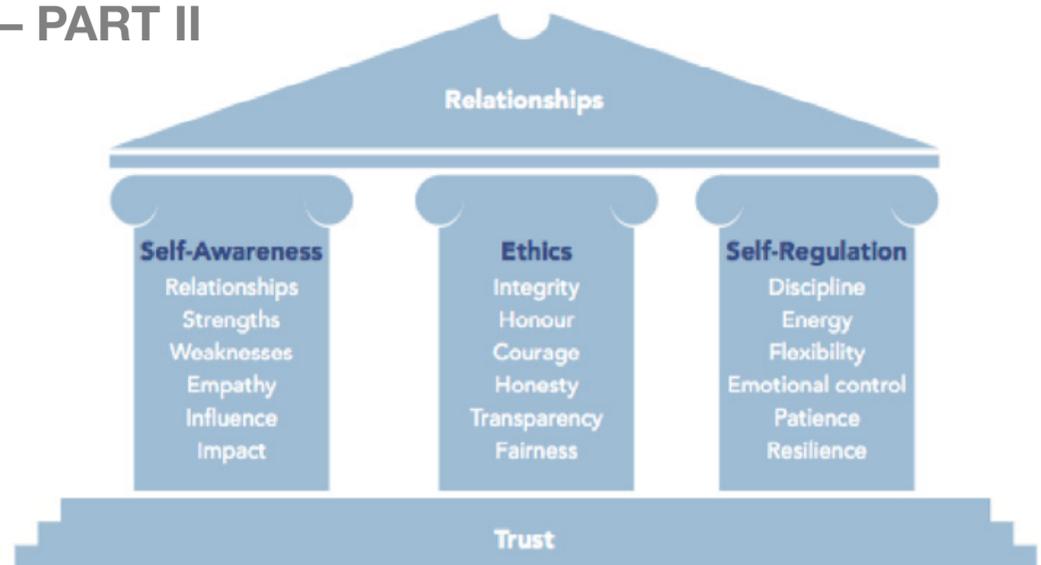
But what does it mean to be authentic, and is being an authentic leader different from that in some way? The Oxford English Dictionary defines authenticity as, “*being genuine*” and “*being real*”. In Western philosophy, we can trace the origins of a desire to be authentic back to the ancient Greek directive of “*Know thyself*” and, subsequently, via Shakespeare’s, “*To thine own self be true*”. Authenticity can be described as consistency and congruence between someone’s beliefs and values and their behaviour: *walking the talk* in other words. An antique piece of furniture can be classified as being either real or fake. In contrast, within psychology, sociology and philosophy, authenticity is not considered to be an either/or condition; rather, an individual

can best be described as being more or less authentic or inauthentic. Authenticity is generally considered a virtue and to be desirable. Why? Research suggests that the individual benefits of leading an authentic life include increased self-confidence, a greater general feeling of being successful at work and in life, better quality relationships, greater feelings of happiness and well-being, combined with decreased stress, anxiety and illness. Overall, being authentic at work and leading an authentic life can be said to engender greater health and even, research suggests, longevity.

Authentic Leadership¹ has been shown to include increased employee engagement, greater creativity and more effective problem solving, an increased sense of employee well-being, lower absence and sickness rates and decreased employee turnover. Organisationally therefore, the benefits include not only growing more effective leaders from within, but also inspiring better working culture, collegial relationships and team working. At every level then, individually,

1 Gardner, W. L., Cogliser, C. C., Davis, K. M., & Dickens, M. P. (2011) Authentic Leadership: A review of the literature and research agenda. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 22 (6) pp. 1120-1145.

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organisationally and at the follower and team levels, Authentic Leadership makes sense, although interestingly, not everyone wants to be an Authentic Leader! Authentic Leadership is an ideal and cannot be said to be an easy discipline. It means having to be your best self, consistently and congruently, and make yourself available as a role model for others. It's hard work, an object of constant scrutiny and not everyone wants to invest the cognitive and emotional effort required.

The Authentic Role Model

I am often asked who I think is a modern authentic leader. Matthew Taylor, the dynamic Chief Executive of the UK's Royal Society of Arts (RSA) and the driving force behind its new, pro-social, 21st Century Enlightenment project, is always quick to share his thoughts or to apologise publicly via his blog if he thinks that he might have got it wrong. This is unlike Dave Hartnett, HM Revenue and Customs Permanent Secretary, whose initial refusal to apologise over the tax

calculation fiasco in September 2010² made him look arrogant and out-of-touch with the very taxpayers who pay his wages. If you look around you and consider the people you know, you may find that you are already working with people you admire and respect who could be considered to be Authentic Leaders when you evaluate them against the 3 Pillars of Authentic Leadership [Ed: See diagram above and previous article – *The Courage to Lead in Issue 02/2013 of this Journal*].

Authentic Leadership is, in some respects, similar to Emotional Intelligence³, including as it does concepts of self-awareness and self-discipline. The suggestion has been made that leaders who are highly emotionally intelligent are more likely to be Authentic Leaders and vice-versa. How then, does Authentic Leadership differ from simply being authentic at work? Whilst being true to your beliefs and values are critical for Authentic Leaders, my PhD research, conducted with both RAF officers and UK business leaders, has identified that authenticity on its own is not enough.

2 <http://www.guardian.co.uk/money/2010/sep/11/revenue-underpaid-tax-no-apology>

3 Goleman, D. (1995) *Emotional Intelligence*. Bantam Books.

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Authentic Leaders are exceptional role models to others; when rated by peers and staff, they are considered to be more self-aware, more self-disciplined and more ethical than other leaders

It seems that Authentic Leadership comprises three things, all of which an Authentic Leader does to a greater degree than other leaders.

Authentic Leaders are exceptional role models to others; they are considered to be more self-aware, more self-disciplined and more ethical. Authentic leaders combine pro-social, collaborative leadership with integrity and purpose. The ABC of authentic leadership is **authenticity**, (being true to yourself and your values), **bravery**, (showing courage, particularly in the face of danger, dissent or unethical behaviour) and **compassion**, (concern for the well-being of others).

Why Authentic Leadership Matters

Authentic Leadership engenders the trust of followers and other stakeholders. As explained in the first of these two articles, employees want to be able to trust their leaders. Research conducted in 2009⁴ highlighted four things that followers want from their leaders. These are neither operational nor strategic, and

they say less about what a leader *does* than who a leader *is* in terms of personal characteristics and values.

Followers want:

- To be able to trust their leaders; to believe that what they say is true.
- For their leaders to be compassionate; to have empathy and to care about their well-being.
- Stability and predictability in their working environment.
- To feel hopeful about the future, something that is impossible without trust being present.

To satisfy these needs is consistently being shown to make a difference to performance, to the organisation and ultimately to individual well-being. Despite the evident effort and acceptance of accountability, in short, the courage adopting Authentic Leadership requires, it is a leadership aspiration that most certainly deserves serious consideration by anyone who wants to make a difference as a leader.

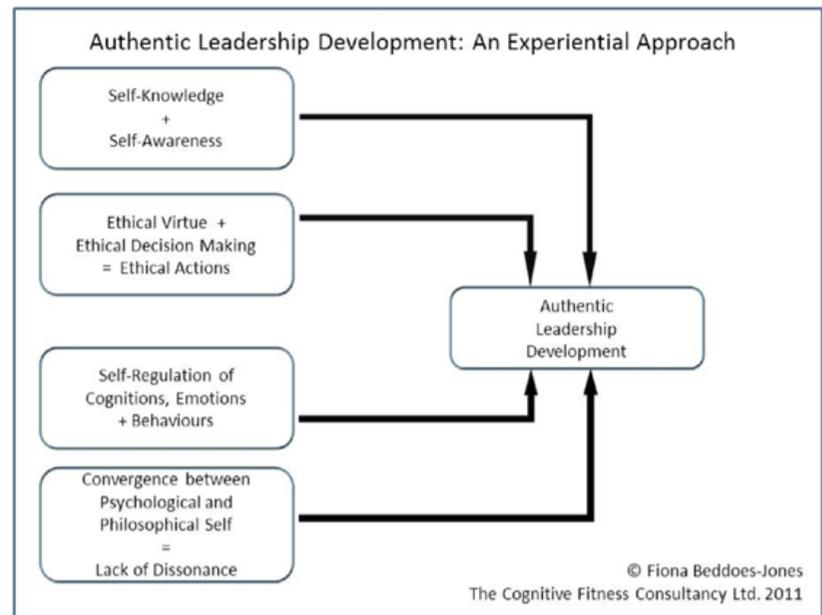
4 <http://businessjournal.gallup.com/content/113542/what-followers-want-from-leaders.aspx>

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Ten steps to developing your Authentic Leadership capacity:

- Read the 10 Principles of Authentic Leadership carefully. Consider the implications that each one of them has for you
- Research the 3 Pillars of Authentic Leadership and understand the cognitive, emotional and behavioural elements which sit within each one
- Select between 3 and 5 elements and begin to pay particular attention to them with a view to doing more of them, more often. Self-awareness, for example, involves both self-reflection (after an event) and reflexivity (awareness at the time an event is happening). Nor is it enough to only think of *yourself*; self-awareness also includes understanding your impact on *others* and how they might be thinking and feeling too, so there's much more to it than there may appear to be at first glance.
- Begin writing a reflective/reflexive diary so you can coach yourself and develop your own 'voice' as a leader; become your harshest critic and your own best friend
- Think about how your life so far has contributed to making you become the leader that you are today. Are you being driven by events or people from your past which are no longer relevant to the kind of leader you want to become?
- Request some kind of 360° appraisal if possible so you can understand how others see you; the more self-aware you are, the more your scores will match other peoples' of you
- Ask for a coach or find yourself a mentor. These don't need to be limited to work; you may find that you already have someone in your life whom you find it easy to talk to and who you can usefully discuss things with who encourages you to look at things from a different perspective
- Be clear about your boundaries; what's private and what you're prepared to share publicly
- Consider how your personality contributes to the kind of leader you are and therefore what kind of Authentic Leader you want to be
- Speak to other managers and leaders about the difficulties and ethical issues which your role entails. You may find that they share your concerns or have experienced similar situations themselves in the past. At the very least, you won't feel so alone in your leadership role.

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Embedding Authentic Leadership Culture in the Organisation.

How can Authentic Leadership be developed at an organisational level? Whilst often overlooked, *the first, and most obvious, point is that this needs to be a deliberate strategic decision.* Getting the underpinning philosophy right is critical to the success of any development programme. The most effective development programmes reflect the beliefs and values of the organisation. BP is a good example of this; officially launched on the 1st January 2012, its revised Code of Conduct and its five values of Safety, Respect, Excellence, Courage and One team embody everything that the organisation and its people do, and are not just limited to a poster on the wall within its leadership development programmes.⁵ [Ed: Recent press comments concerning investigations into price rigging within the oil industry⁶ exemplify one of the difficulties facing companies making serious efforts to emphasise the application of corporate values in the organisation. Today's efforts to improve corporate culture provide no safeguard to loss of reputation from allegations of misconduct relating to the past].

Secondly, design the leadership development programme around the 3 Pillars of Authentic Leadership, making the connections and links between all of the programme elements clear⁷. Too often in my experience, programme participants are expected to somehow work it all out for themselves as they make sense of a course in their own ways. This means that some people get more out of the experience than others, there is a lack of consistency regarding learning outcomes and application and, worst case scenario, some people may miss the point completely! In the very best programmes, learning is reinforced and supported in a variety of ways; leader self-awareness, for example, will be supported by 360° feedback, done at the beginning and end of a programme so changes in colleague and follower perceptions of leadership performance can be tracked. 1:1 coaching and a supportive buddy system which encourages reflection is always beneficial for participant learning, and real-time, 'live' projects can be focused around pro-social, community issues,

5 <http://bit.ly/10Jr0k7> at www.bp.com

6 <http://on.ft.com/12NKJ4V>

7 <http://www.3peaksleadership.co.uk>

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Research reveals that the majority of leadership development programmes last for two days or fewer. This simply isn't long enough to embed learning or allow for any kind of real reflection or cognitive and behavioural change

specific organisational problems or ethical considerations, all of which will increase the intrinsic value of the programme and embed leader learning.

Thirdly, the programme needs to be long enough! Research reveals that the majority of leadership development programmes last for two days or fewer. This simply isn't long enough to embed learning or allow for any kind of real reflection or cognitive and behavioural change. A programme of regular and planned inputs, over six months or a year, with a group of people you can trust, is a much more powerful way to develop positive leadership and an effective leadership pipeline than an ad-hoc away day labelled 'leadership development'.

It's very important that the organisation selects both the right people to attend the programme and also the right people to run it. The trainers/facilitators/coaches will be role models for the courses they are involved with and, if they are not knowledgeable, experienced, likeable, supportive and authentic, the course participants will soon realise and the efficacy of the programme will be diminished. Likewise, selecting participants is another strategic decision;

is inclusion company-wide or limited by certain criteria such as grade or potential? Will differing levels of leadership/management be included? Is the purpose general leadership development or to grow the pipeline of future potential senior leaders? Do participants need to apply and make a case for attending, or will they simply be selected and told to attend? All of the answers to these questions should be transparent and be clearly linked to the Underpinning Philosophy of the programme and organisational values. If they are not, then the programme will be muddled and, whilst it may be an *authentic* programme, it won't be an *Authentic Leadership* programme.

Accepting the Value of Authentic Learning

Finally, building in an open and transparent ongoing review of the programme, its results, successes, problems and learning points is crucial. Organisational self-awareness is as important as individual self-awareness from an Authentic Leadership perspective, and just as everything that happens to an individual leader is an opportunity for them to reflect and learn something from a personal/professional

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What are the 10 Principles of Authentic Leadership?

- People will be Authentic in their own ways regarding their personal leadership style
- Authentic Leadership involves leading with heart and courage, i.e. passion and compassion
- Leader *self*-awareness isn't enough; the term also encompasses *other*-awareness
- Trust is an *output* of Authentic Leadership, not a *input*
- Being yourself isn't enough; Authentic Leaders are their *Best Selves*
- You are always a role model, (whether you like it or not), whatever you do, you give others permission to do
- Authentic Leadership is the *sum total* of who you are, what you know, what you believe and what you value
- Authentic Leadership is an embodied attitude of mind; it's as much of a way of *being* (in the world), as it is a way of *doing* (leadership)
- You need to learn to lead yourself, so others choose to follow; Authentic Leadership is about relationships not power
- As Authentic Leadership is *relational*; it concerns the relationship that you have with *yourself* as much as it is about the relationships that you have with *others*

perspective, so every organisational initiative, project or collaboration is also an opportunity for the organisation, (that is, the people in the organisation who make up its management and leadership), to learn something valuable about what works well, what doesn't and therefore what to do next time to ensure success.

Authenticity in Leadership, and in the organisational fabric of the organisation itself, is a driver of greater transparency, trust, commitment and ultimately performance. Irrespective of the objectives set, or at the level these are set at, achieving the benefits of clarity of expectations, observable organisational justice and a clear demonstration of ethical values through

role models and by example should be clear. No-one can say that achieving and maintaining the requirements of Authentic Leadership is anything other than a challenge – but the potential rewards to be reaped are worth the effort. ■

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