

12 Keys to Authentic Leadership

Here are 12 points on the **importance and practice of being Authentic as a leader.**

Authenticity rules. Some best practices I've found helpful:

1. **Be real in all mediums.** Digital age makes it easy to be inauthentic. Although we are always "on," ultimately we can create a fake persona behind a profile on Facebook or a twitter account. It's easy to live a secondary life and feel like we are someone we aren't. Have to be authentic across the board.

2. **Constantly turn the rocks over in your life and in your leadership.** Uncover the areas that need to be made clean. Big things are at stake. It's exhausting to not be the real you. It's easier and less work to be who you really are.

3. **The more successful you become, the less accessible you are.** It's reality. More people clamor for time with you, but it's not possible to be available to everyone. Be wise and discerning, but also open to helping where you can. As Andy Stanley says "do for one what you wish you could do for many."

4. **Learn to open up.** You can impress people more easily from a distance, so many leaders keep others at arms length. For example, we often prefer digital interaction to life-on-life exchanges. This insulates us and prevents others from uncovering our weaknesses and flaws. But it also reduces our ability to influence others.

5. **Ask great questions.** Great leaders I know solve problems and create solutions through the questions they ask. Questions many times reflect your values.

6. **Invite direct reports to do a 360 degree review of you on a regular basis.** It's uncomfortable, but also helpful. As Rick Warren has said, "You can't love people and influence them unless you are close to them. Up close means you can see my warts."

7. **Accept a better standard.** The goal of every Christian is to become more like Christ, but often our standard becomes some "great" leader who we admire. When we exalt fellow influencers, we try to dress like them, talk like them, pray like them, tell jokes like them, and achieve like them, it's dangerous. By emulating them we hope to someday become like them. This never works, and a painful side effect is that deep down we end up feeling like a cheap knock-off.

8. **Be interested over interesting.** Start with leaning into others and caring about them vs. only worrying about yourself.

9. **Be accountable to those who know you best.** Know your blind spots in your leadership. We all have areas of weakness. Know what they are and give your team, your family and your friends permission to call you on them. Are you comfortable enough in your leadership that those around you have the freedom to tell you the truth without repercussions?

10. **Authentic leaders make more of those around them, and less about themselves.** They are servant leaders and willing to be less in order for others to be more. Authentic leaders seek to serve and understand the power of putting others first. And great leaders attract great people to their team. Like attracts like.

11. **Actively Build a Support Network-** Beware of CEO disease, the temptation to surround yourself with people who only tell you what you want to hear. Keep honest people in your life so that you can stay grounded in the reality of your experiences. Don't ever think you've arrived. Don't take yourself so seriously. You're not a big deal. Seriously. I don't care who you are. Humility is way more attractive than arrogance.

12. **Be who you are.** Authenticity requires true honesty, self awareness and a selfless approach to leading. One of the challenges in organizations today is actually creating space for leaders to admit and share their challenges. We need to create community where you can talk about the things you are dealing with without getting arrows in the back. **Be willing to share your struggles.** Create and find environments where we can deal with things and be honest and real.