

# 10 Things Authentic Leaders Do

Robin Sharma

What would your life look like if you had absolutely no fear? What kinds of things would you do if you lived from a frame of reference that your thoughts literally could form your world? How brightly would your light shine if you stepped out of the limitations that are keeping you small and stretched yourself well past your comfort zone into the place that you know, deep within, you are meant to be? **Authentic leadership is all about being the person you know in your heart you have always been destined to be. Authentic leadership does not come from your title or from the size of your paycheck. Instead, this form of leadership comes from your being and the person that you are.**

Here are 10 things that authentic leaders do regularly:

1. **They speak their truth.** In business today, we frequently 'swallow our truth'. We say things to please others and to look good in front of The Crowd. Authentic leaders are different. They consistently talk truth. They would never betray themselves by using words that are not aligned with who they are. This does not give anyone a license to say things that are hurtful to people. Speaking truth is simply about being clear, being honest and being authentic.
2. **They lead from the heart.** Business is about people. Leadership is about people. The best leaders wear their hearts on their sleeves and are not afraid to show their vulnerability. They genuinely care about other people and spend their days developing the people around them. They are like the sun: the sun gives away all it has to the plants and the trees. But in return, the plants and the trees always grow toward the sun.
3. **They have rich moral fiber.** Who you are speaks far more loudly than anything you could ever say. Strength of character is true power - and people can feel it a mile away. Authentic leaders work on their character. They walk their talk and are aligned with their core values. They are noble and good. And in doing so, people trust, respect and listen to them.
4. **They are courageous.** It takes a lot of courage to go against the crowd. It takes a lot of courage to be a visionary. It takes a lot of inner strength to do what you think is right even though it may not be easy. We live in a world where so many people walk the path of least resistance. Authentic leadership is all about taking the road less traveled and doing, not what is easy, but what is right.
5. **They build teams and create communities.** One of the primary things that people are looking for in their work experience is a sense of community. In the old days, we got our community from where we lived. We would have block parties and street picnics. In the new age of work, employees seek their sense of community and connection from the workplace. Authentic leaders create workplaces that foster human linkages and lasting friendships.
6. **They deepen themselves.** The job of the leader is to go deep. Authentic leaders know themselves intimately. They nurture a strong self-relationship. They know their weaknesses and play to their strengths. And they always spend a lot of time transcending their fears.
7. **They are dreamers.** Einstein said that, "Imagination is more important than knowledge." It is from our imaginations that great things are born. Authentic leaders dare to dream impossible dreams. They see what everyone else sees and then dream up new possibilities. They spend a lot of time with their eyes closed creating blueprints and fantasies that lead to better products, better services, better workplaces and deeper value. How often do you dream?
8. **They care for themselves.** Taking care of your physical dimension is a sign of self-respect. You can't do great things at work if you don't feel good. Authentic leaders eat well, exercise and care for the temples that

are their bodies. They spend time in nature, drink plenty of water and get regular massages so that, physically, they are operating at planet-class levels of performance.

9. **They commit to excellence rather than perfection.** No human being is perfect. Every single one of us is a work in progress. Authentic leaders commit themselves to excellence in everything that they do. They are constantly pushing the envelope and raising their standards. They do not seek perfection and have the wisdom to know the difference. What would your life look like if you raised your standards well beyond what anyone could ever imagine of you?
10. **They leave a legacy.** To live in the hearts of the people around you is to never die. Success is wonderful but significance is even better. You were made to contribute and to leave a mark on the people around you. In failing to live from this frame of reference, you betray yourself. Authentic leaders are constantly building their legacies by adding deep value to everyone that they deal with and leaving the world a better place in the process.

## 8 Core Beliefs of Extraordinary Leaders

Geoffrey James – adapted by Thomas J. Walter

A few years back, I interviewed some of the most successful CEOs in the world in order to discover their management secrets. I learned that the "best of the best" tend to share the following eight core beliefs.

### 1. Business is an ecosystem, not a battlefield.

*Average bosses* see business as a conflict between companies, departments and groups. They build huge armies of "troops" to order about, demonize competitors as "enemies," and treat customers as "territory" to be conquered.

*Extraordinary leaders* see business as a symbiosis where the most diverse firm is most likely to survive and thrive. They naturally create teams that adapt easily to new markets and can quickly form partnerships with other companies, customers ... and even competitors.

### 2. A company is a community, not a machine.

*Average bosses* consider their company to be a machine with employees as cogs. They create rigid structures with rigid rules and then try to maintain control by "pulling levers" and "steering the ship."

*Extraordinary leaders* see their company as a collection of individual hopes and dreams, all connected to a higher purpose. They inspire employees to dedicate themselves to the success of their peers and therefore to the community—and company—at large.

### 3. Management is service, not control.

*Average bosses* want employees to do exactly what they're told. They're hyper-aware of anything that smacks of insubordination and create environments where individual initiative is squelched by the "wait and see what the boss says" mentality.

*Extraordinary leaders* set a general direction and then commit themselves to obtaining the resources that their employees need to get the job done. They push decision making downward, allowing teams form their own rules and intervening only in emergencies.

### 4. My employees are my peers, not my children.

*Average bosses* see employees as inferior, immature beings who simply can't be trusted if not overseen by a patriarchal management. Employees take their cues from this attitude, expend energy on looking busy and covering their behinds.

*Extraordinary leaders* treat every employee as if he or she were the most important person in the firm. Excellence is expected everywhere, from the loading dock to the boardroom. As a result, employees at all levels take charge of their own destinies.

### 5. Motivation comes from vision, not from fear.

*Average bosses* see fear--of getting fired, of ridicule, of loss of privilege--as a crucial way to motivate people. As a result, employees and managers alike become paralyzed and unable to make risky decisions.

*Extraordinary leaders* inspire people to see a better future and how they'll be a part of it. As a result, employees work harder because they believe in the organization's goals, truly enjoy what they're doing and (of course) know they'll share in the rewards.

## **6. Change equals growth, not pain.**

*Average bosses* see change as both complicated and threatening, something to be endured only when a firm is in desperate shape. They subconsciously torpedo change ... until it's too late.

*Extraordinary leaders* see change as an inevitable part of life. While they don't value change for its own sake, they know that success is only possible if employees and organization embrace new ideas and new ways of doing business.

## **7. Technology offers empowerment, not automation.**

*Average bosses* adhere to the old IT-centric view that technology is primarily a way to strengthen management control and increase predictability. They install centralized computer systems that dehumanize and antagonize employees.

*Extraordinary leaders* see technology as a way to free human beings to be creative and to build better relationships. They adapt their back-office systems to the tools, like smartphones and tablets, that people actually want to use.

## **8. Work should be fun, not mere toil.**

*Average bosses* buy into the notion that work is, at best, a necessary evil. They fully expect employees to resent having to work, and therefore tend to subconsciously define themselves as oppressors and their employees as victims. Everyone then behaves accordingly.

*Extraordinary leaders* see work as something that should be inherently enjoyable—and believe therefore that the most important job of manager is, as far as possible, to put people in jobs that can and will make them truly happy.

**When I Talk to **Managers**  
I get the feeling that  
They are Important.**

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**When I Talk to **Leaders**  
I get the feeling that  
I am Important.**

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"The leaders who work most effectively, it seems to me, never say 'I.' And that's not because they have trained themselves not to say 'I.' They don't think 'I.' They think 'we'; they think 'team.' They understand their job to be to make the team function. They accept responsibility and don't sidestep it, but 'we' gets the credit. This is what creates trust, what enables you to get the task done."

Peter Drucker

# **Mary Parker Follet Quotes**

(Circa 1920-1930)

## **Mother of Modern Leadership**

Leadership is not defined by the exercise of power but by the capacity to increase the sense of power among those led.

The most essential work of the leader is to create more leaders.

Part of the task of the leader is to make others participate in his leadership. The best leader knows how to make his followers actually feel power themselves, not merely acknowledge his (their) power.

There are three ways of dealing with difference: domination, compromise, and integration. By domination only one side gets what it wants; by compromise neither side gets what it wants; by integration we find a way by which both sides may get what they wish.

That is always our problem, not how to get control of people, but how all together we can get control of a situation.

Leadership is the art of getting things done through people.

Many people tell me what I ought to do and just how I ought to do it, but few have made me want to do something.

# The Introverted Leader Thriving in the Extroverted Business World

By Jennifer B. Kahnweiler, Ph.D.

In today's extroverted business world, introverts can feel ignored, overlooked, and misunderstood. In fact, according to my research--a two-and-a-half year national study of introverted professionals--four out of five introverts say extroverts are more likely to get ahead in their workplace. What's more, over 40 percent say they would like to change their introverted tendencies, but don't know where or how to begin.

The good news? Introversion can be managed. There is no one-size-fits-all strategy, but with time and practice, introverted pros can learn to build on their quiet strength and succeed.

What is introversion, anyway?

Introverts may be less noisy at work, but by all accounts they outnumber extroverts. Even many high-powered executives--a full 40 percent--describe themselves as introverts, including Microsoft's Bill Gates and uber-investor Warren Buffett. Odds are, President Obama is an introvert as well. But what is introversion, anyway?

Unlike shyness, a product of anxiety or fear in social settings, introversion is a key part of personality--a hardwired orientation--and may be best defined by several characteristic behaviors. Introverts process information internally, keep personal matters private, and avoid showing emotion. Other defining behaviors:

## **Seek solitude**

Introverts need and want to spend time alone. They often suffer from people exhaustion and must retreat to recharge their batteries. At work, they prefer quiet, private spaces and like to handle projects on their own or with a small group.

## **Think first, talk later**

Introverts think before they speak. Even in casual water cooler chats, they consider others' comments carefully and pause and reflect before responding. They dislike interruptions, especially when they are thinking things through.

## **Focus on depth**

Introverts seek depth over breadth. They like to dig deep--delving into issues and ideas before moving on to new ones. They are drawn to meaningful conversations--not superficial chit-chat--and know how to tune in and listen to others.

## **Let their fingers do the talking**

Introverts prefer writing to talking. On the job, they opt for e-mail over the telephone and stop by only when necessary. Averse to excessive conversation, many gravitate toward social networking Web sites such as LinkedIn, Facebook, and Twitter.

## **Exhibit calmness**

Introverts are usually quiet, reserved, and low-key. Unlike extroverts, they have no desire to be the center of attention, preferring to fly below the radar instead. Even in heated conversations or circumstances, they tend to stay calm--at least on the outside--and speak softly and slowly.

## **The hard realities**

"It's not easy being green," laments Muppet Kermit the Frog. Same goes for being introverted in an extroverted business culture. With their appetite for talk and attention, extroverts dominate the workplace. Meanwhile, introverts--with their quiet smarts and unsung successes--sit on the professional sidelines. Some hard realities faced by introverted pros:

### **People exhaustion**

Introverts can experience an assortment of ailments at work--headaches, backaches, stomach aches, and more--yet feel fine off the job. This mind-body response to stress can result from a wide range of factors. The chief culprit: people exhaustion.

### **Project overload**

Introverts tend to have difficulty saying no and find it equally hard to ask for help or direction. As a result, they frequently feel overloaded with projects and deadlines--hurting their on-the-job performance and work-life balance.

### **Underselling**

Introverts typically stay mum about their accomplishments--seeming to abide by the old Southern adage, "Don't brag on yourself." Yet today careers are made or broken by what others know about a person's skills and potential. Introverts, therefore, can miss out on promotions or plum assignments simply because they don't sell themselves.

### **Unheard ideas**

Introverts often have great ideas that go unheard. In group settings, they may show up with smart solutions, yet can't seem to find an opening in which to share them. Even in one-on-one conversations--especially with talkers--they have trouble interjecting their ideas and being heard.

### **Failure to "play the game"**

Introverts routinely retreat from office politics. Sure, politics can be nasty, but much of the game is natural and necessary, particularly for building relationships up and down an organization. Introverts, with their desire to be low-key, often fail to sniff out important politicking opportunities and wind up watching their extroverted colleagues get ahead.

### **Onward--and upward**

There is no magic bullet for managing your introversion. But in today's noisy business world and workplace, you can learn how to thrive. The goal is not changing your personality or natural work style, but embracing and expanding who you are. As an ongoing framework, follow the "4 P's": preparation (devising game plans); presence (focusing on the moment); push (stretching and growing); and practice (rehearsing and refining new skills). Seven practical tips for getting started:

#### **Have a game plan.**

Rather than wing it on the people part of your job, have a game plan. Prepare for high-stakes meetings and conversations--anticipating questions and rehearsing your responses. Fact is, just as you strategize for key projects and tasks, you need to plan ahead for connecting with people--and taking regular timeouts to refuel your energy.

#### **Communicate early and often.**

It's easy for introverts to be out of sight--and out of mind. So, take the initiative in sharing information--communicating early and often with higher-ups, team members, and project stakeholders. Don't wait to be asked for updates or news about your accomplishments. Find out what people need to feel confident in you and provide it to them--ahead of time.

#### **Match the medium to the message.**

Resist the temptation to hide behind e-mail. It may appear to be the easiest or safest channel, but it's not always the right one. For every exchange, match the medium to the message--determining if texting, e-mail, phone, or face-to-face is best. Texting and e-mail may be great for quick exchanges, but they miss the mark in critical high-touch areas, including developing relationships and delivering difficult news.

#### **Use social networking to set the stage.**

Technology is a great tool for preparing to meet people. Use social networking Web sites such as Facebook and Twitter to set the stage for connecting with others in person at meetings and events. You can introduce yourself, send "news you can use" items, and warm up cold leads--all in a low-key yet friendly way.

#### **Get your voice in the room.**

Without delay, speak up in meetings and conference calls. Try to make your first comment no more than five minutes into the session. Even a quick question, remark, or paraphrase will do. You need to be seen as a contributor, but the longer you wait, the harder it becomes.

#### **Stand up to "talkers."**

Don't be afraid to take on the talkers in group or one-on-one settings. There are several ways to stand up and get a word in edgewise. One simple, sure-fire strategy: hold up your hand, give the stop or timeout signal, and calmly announce, "I'd like to say something."

#### **Value humor.**

"A smile is the shortest distance between two people," mused entertainer Victor Borge. As a reserved, inner-focused contributor, you can overcome perceptions of being standoffish or too serious by smiling, laughing, and having fun now and then. You need not "yuk it up"--just be good-humored.

Finally, practice, practice, practice. Learning new skills and behaviors may be uncomfortable at first, but with conscious repetition and refinement, you can manage your introversion--and thrive in the extroverted business world.