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The Cast Communication Design newsletter - July 2011

Reality Check

Five Steps to Stop 'Authenticity' from Becoming the New Bullshit

by Jim Knutsen, Founder and CEO

The other day I saw a tweet calling for leaders to exhibit "genuine authenticity." Not long ago U.S. News & World Report ran an article titled "Truly Authentic Leadership."

Uh-oh. When we have to start putting qualifiers in front of a word like authenticity, we are in danger of losing the word altogether.

It's the hot topic in leadership circles, but what does authentic leadership mean? A quick Google search tells me that authentic leaders "act heroically"... lead "from their hearts"... "exercise integrity"... "dream"... demonstrate "genuine insight"... "speak their own truths"... and "have a rich moral fiber."

Authenticity is becoming the new bullshit.

The buzz around authenticity speaks to our collective craving for more human connection at work. For leaders to stop talking like automatons and start talking like people...like *themselves*.

The trajectory of internal communication leads us away from the old-school cascade

Why the name Cast?

[Read our story](#)

What's Up at Cast

- Jim attended the Aspen Ideas Festival June 27-July 3. [Learn more](#)
- Our leadership team will convene in Minneapolis July 12-13.
- We are happy to welcome [TOMS](#) to our family of clients. Jim will kick things off with a visit to TOMS headquarters in Santa Monica, Calif. later this month.

Facebook Poll

Is it okay for senior executives to have someone else write their tweets?

[Post your reply on our Facebook page](#)

Our Services

We design today's internal communication solutions, which includes services in the following areas:

- Research/Audit
- Story Development

(Let me tell you what you need to know), but doesn't stop at the more-recent emphasis on dialogue (Do you understand what I told you?). Social media has created an expectation for *relationships*, in which leaders, employees and peers are invested in accomplishing something together. Business success increasingly hinges on the ability to meet this expectation.

You can't build relationships through the mask of formal leadership and dehumanizing corporate jargon. You need to show up as you.

Let's make it practical. Five easy steps to more, ahem, authentically authentic leadership:

1. Become a storyteller. Stories humanize both the content and the teller, while inviting listeners in. Leaders need to be ready to tell Who I Am, Who We Are, and Where We're Going stories. Lean on the conventions of narrative - plot, theme, setting, context, tension, resolution.
2. Take a PowerPoint hiatus. Formal presentations force us into linear, disengaging communications. Slides provide visual support for a monologue, not invitations into conversation and relationship.
3. Be interested. Your people are not cogs. Make time to listen to their stories. Walk the halls. Host coffee chats. Make time in meetings for personal connections. And don't just go through the motions... listen.
4. Be vulnerable. Vulnerability places huge deposits in the trust account. In our best and strongest relationships, we know and accept the bad with the good. We need to bring a measure of that to work. You are not a superhero. You are a leader with human strengths and weaknesses. Share them.
5. Find the nexus between Who You Are and What They Need. The cop-out of authenticity is saying, "Hey! I was just being true to myself!" That's not good enough. Successful leadership is not about you, it's about how you bring your authentic self to meet the needs of

- Strategy and Structure
- Implementation

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hello@castcommunicationdesign.com

719.634.0303



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others.

Don't let authenticity be just another buzz word in your organization. Mean it, own it, do it. No qualifiers required.

From the Blog

There's No App for Culture

by Katharine Kelly, Senior Consultant

I had the pleasure of attending the [Enterprise 2.0 Conference](#) in Boston this week. It was a 3-day geekapalooza centered around the future of social business (and yes, I think by the end there was some consensus that "social business" is the new term for "Enterprise 2.0"). There were lots of smart people and lots of smart thinking, and one thing was clear:

The way work gets done is changing and the change is so profound that no one is really sure what it will ultimately look like - or how best to get there.

But here's what we DO know: People are at the center of this revolution, not technology.

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