

## Ten Steps to Leading More Authentically

### 1. Go first

An effective, authentic leader does not blame others for declining revenues, low morale or a climate of fear. Authentic leaders get clear about the changes needed and then begin the change themselves, painting the vision for others through their actions, their words and their attitude.

### 2. Get clear about the current reality and the vision. The work to do is in the gap.

Don't spend time worrying about how you got to where you are. Take a realistic look at your current situation and then look at where you envision being. What is the gap? Chart a course to close the gap. Think of your organization like a moving pin on a GPS navigation system. Set out the goal and continually reassess and adjust to keep moving closer to it. If you get off-course, correct immediately and keep moving.

### 3. Collaboratively generate your authentic brand story.

Continually listen within the organization and outside the organization to determine if what you are doing is resonating authentically. For example, if you tout that "you treat employees right" but employees informally say otherwise, find out what's causing this disconnect and treat it as a serious issue to be addressed.

### 4. Clean up what isn't aligned with your authentic story.

Let's look at the example given in #3 again. Your employees are saying that it's who you know in the organization, not who you are and what you know that matters. They don't feel that their character, talent and contribution is valued. Take a hard look: Is this true? If so, what is creating this informal "policy?" How can you develop a more objective review process that creates a level playing field and how can you collaboratively engage employees in its development?

### 5. Develop and exhibit compassion.

This stems from The Golden Rule: Do unto others as you want done to you. As you make decisions and take actions, put yourself in the other person's place in the situation. How would you want to be treated? This is a tough one because the demands and hectic pace we allow to dominate our lives leave no room to think about others as if we were them. Commit to this and work diligently to have more compassion and you will make a lasting difference in not only other people's lives, but also your own.

### 6. Learn to tell the naked truth to yourself and to others.

My grandmother told me the story of how, for years, she took special care to cook and serve chicken necks to my grandfather. Years went by and one day my grandfather told the truth—that he hated chicken necks. A friend tells the story of a woman she knows who hates the jewelry her husband buys her but tells him that she loves it so she won't "hurt his feelings." Be willing to be wounded by the truth. Ask for the truth, speak the truth with compassion and know that sometimes it will hurt.

### 7. Believe in and honor each person's value in your organization's authentic story.

Value people equally regardless of their position or contribution to your organization. There is no role too small to be held with respect and no person too anything to be held with little or no dignity. How we view people and treat people says a lot about us, not them.

### 8. Free people to uniquely contribute and passionately invent the future.

Create an environment that frees people by learning to be free yourself—free from the tyranny of your calendar, free from endless distractions, free from the "I should of and could of" and free from believing you have no choice in the decisions you make.

### 9. Develop authentic relationships.

Create relationships from a place of genuine interest. Pretending to be interested in someone for business' sake isn't good for business in the long run. A lot of people pretend. Choose to be different: really care.

### 10. Persevere and stay the course.

It's common way to veer off course in times of challenge. Choose to be uncommon and find a way to persevere in being a strong leader guided by integrity, truth and fairness. This doesn't preclude tough decisions; but again, how would you want the situation to be handled if you were the one on the other side of it?