Discovering Your Authentic Leadership

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Any universal characteristics or traits?
Background

• > 1000 studies failed to determine the definitive styles, characteristics or personality traits of great leaders
Authentic Leadership
Rediscovering the Secrets to Creating Lasting Value
Bill George
Former Chairman and CEO, Medtronic
Definition

• The word **authentic** derives originally from Greek sources meaning one who accomplishes.
• True to one’s own personality, spirit, or character
• Fidelity, actuality and fact, compatibility with a certain source or origin; a complete sincerity without feigning or hypocrisy.
• Genuine; actual character not counterfeited, imitated or adulterated (Merriam Webster Dictionary)
• Entitled to acceptance or belief, as being in accordance with fact, or as stating fact; reliable, trustworthy, of established credit. (Oxford English Dictionary)
• Being yourself, being the person you were created to be. (Bill George)
“Being yourself, being the person you were created to be.”

Bill George
Figure 2.1: The Authentic Leader’s Characteristics
Purpose

• “How can people become and remain authentic leaders?”
Qualitative studies

• In-depth interview
• n = 125 leaders

Inclusion criteria:
• Their reputations for authenticity & effectiveness as leaders
• Personal knowledge of them
• Recommendations from other leaders & academics
Results

• Age: 23 – 93 yrs
• CEOs (50%)
• Another half: profit to nonprofit leaders, midcareer leaders, young leaders just starting their journey
• Did not identify any universal characteristics, traits, skills or styles that led to their success
• Do not have to be born with specific characteristics or traits of a leader.
• Leadership emerges from their life story.
How?

1) Knowing your authentic self
2) Practice your values and principles
3) Balancing your extrinsic and intrinsic motivations
4) Building your support team
5) Integrating your life by staying grounded
(1) Knowing your authentic self
Self-awareness

Your life story

Your passion

Leadership for what purpose?
Self-awareness

• Your personal narrative that matters, not the mere facts of your life
• Loss of job, personal illness, death of a close friend or relative, feeling of being excluded by peers
• To reframe these events and discover their passion to lead
Daniel Vasella

- Novartis chairman & CEO
- Born in 1953 in Switzerland, a modest family
- 4 yrs: food poisoning
- 5 yrs: Asthma & sent alone to the mountains of eastern Switzerland for 4 months
- 8 yrs: TB → Meningitis, sanatorium for 1 yr
• 10 yrs: death of his 18-yr-old sister
• 13 yrs: father died in surgery
• 20 yrs: enter medical school
• Sought out psychotherapy & reframe his life story
• Wanted to help a wide range of people than he could as an individual practitioner
• Upon completion of his residency, with fascination in finance & business, join the pharmaceutical division of Sandoz
• Sales representatives
• Product manager
• Sandoz marketing organization
• 1996: Sandoz merged with Ciba-Geigy, now called Novartis
• Appointed as the CEO
• Build a new culture centered on compassion, competence & competition
• A compassionate leader
(2) Practice your values and principles
(2) Practice your values and principles

- Value: “concern for others”
- Principle: “create a work environment where people are respected for their contributions, provided job security, and allowed to fulfill their potential”
Test Under Pressure
Jon Huntsman

- Founder & chairman of Huntsman Corporation
- Work for Nixon administration in 1972
- To entrap a California congressman who had been opposing a White House initiative
- To place some undocumented workers at the congressman’s plant in an undercover operation
• Halfway through his conversation with his plant manager, he changed his mind.
• He would not use his employees in this way.
(3) Balancing your extrinsic and intrinsic motivations
Extrinsic Motivators
Intrinsic Motivators
(4) Building your support team
Multi-faceted support structure

- Spouses
- Families
- Mentors
- Close friends
- Colleagues
• Counsel them in times of uncertainty, help them in times of difficulty, and celebrate with them in times of success.

• To provide affirmation, advice, perspective and calls for course corrections when needed.
Enduring Relationships

• Build their networks over time
• Open with people (our life stories, bad news or critical feedback)
• To be open and vulnerable
(5) Integrating your life by staying grounded
To Compartamentalize Your Life
Be the same person…

• Work, family, community and friends
• Spend time with their families and close friends
• Engage in spiritual practices
• Do community services
• Return to the places where they grew up
Staying grounded

• Balanced life, e.g. eat, sleep, exercise, etc.
→ enable them to sustain their authenticity
Questions to Ask

1. Which people and experiences in your early life had the greatest impact on you?
2. What tools do you use to become self-aware?
3. What are your most deeply held values?
4. What motivates your extrinsically and intrinsically?
5. What kind of support team do you have?
6. Is your life integrated?
7. What does being authentic mean in your life?
8. What steps can you take today, tomorrow, and over the next year to develop your authentic leadership?
Summary

- Self-awareness from your life story
- Passion for your purpose
- Build your support team via enduring relationships
- Balance your motivations
- Integrating your life with consistency & self-discipline
Figure 2.1: The Authentic Leader’s Characteristics
Thank You