

Authentic Leadership Strategies that Matter

By **Jessika M. Ferm**

Current leadership resources emphasize the term “authentic leadership.” How does one develop authentic leadership or management skills? What everyday steps can one take to move closer to self-awareness? Here are some tips that truly matter:

Schedule a “leadership tune-up.” Set aside at least two hours away from the office and bring a pen and paper. Write down your personal standards for working and living authentically. They may sound something like: “I will speak the truth as I see it,” “My family is more important than any job,” “My health comes first,” “I don’t accept bullying behaviors from clients or employees,” etc. When you have listed about 3-10 standards, rate yourself based on how well you are doing currently. You may want to use a 1-10 scale. Circle the one with the lowest score to begin developing action steps around. In the future when you experience a situation that may challenge your authenticity, check the

situation against the list and decide how you want to react in order to remain authentic.

Check in on your boundaries. If you are not crystal clear about where your boundaries are, chances are someone else will find the edge of them and try to move you outside your comfort zone. Identify at least three boundaries that you have around your leadership style and write them down on a piece of paper. They may sound something like: “I don’t mind if people have good reasons for occasional tardiness. Pervasive and consistent tardiness is not acceptable,” “There may be times when withholding details is necessary. Outright lying is never OK,” etc. These exercises help clarify where you stand and give others a clear sense of what is important to you.

Start your personal “Integrity Program.” After realizing that she was making decisions that didn’t exactly mesh with her values, one of our clients began what she called the “Integ-

riety Program.” It was self-designed process by which she assessed her own decisions and actions against her internal values. The integrity program became her guide for doing what she knew was right even when other options were more tempting. Begin your personal integrity program today and say goodbye to defending and justifying decisions and actions that do not jive with your values.

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