

4 Authentic Leadership Traits that Build Trust

By Ann N. Gatty, Ph.D.



How do we describe authentic leadership, and how does it lend itself to building trust with your peers and your staff? Actually, authenticity has many facets, but primarily it comes down to being genuine. If a leader is genuine, people know what to expect, and the opportunity to build trust begins. Trust is built through daily and consistent action. The leader's integrity becomes predictable. Let's look at 4 attributes that contribute to being authentic and, in turn, build trust.

1. Self-awareness—Know thyself first

An authentic leader takes time to identify the personal experiences brought to the table, along with competencies and personality traits. The competencies don't have to be extensive, but a leader knows how to communicate to others and model the competencies she owns. Extraordinary leaders are those who emphasize their strengths and use them effectively as their self-expression in a leadership situation.

2. Lead with heart

An authentic leader is all heart. You should lead your team with a courage and empathy that only comes from listening to the heart. These are the soft skills that leaders need, and they include compassion, kindness and understanding of others. As an authentic leader, consider what it feels like to walk in others' shoes. When you lead with the heart, you are willing to show vulnerability. This also increases trust. We know that in order to foster trust, you as a leader, must first trust others. By trusting others first, you show your vulnerability. When you develop mutual trust, you find it easier to share leadership responsibilities throughout the organization. You find that people who will go the extra mile knowing their leader cares.

3. Model Transparency

To show authenticity, start with open, transparent communication. The image you project in public should not be drastically different from how you are in private. Transparency allows you to be honest if you make a mistake. It allows others to feel comfortable admitting their faults when things go wrong.

People respect leaders who are honest and transparent. Take a minute to think of the personality traits you utilize at work that are also present in your private life. The willingness to self-disclose

when you don't know something—shows transparency. As you craft your unique leadership style, think about how you can maintain transparency in your actions and decisions.

4. Draw on your own experience

There is no better teacher than life. When working with your staff, sharing lessons you have learned from past experiences, illustrates your points. Also relying on your life experiences helps you see things differently, and the context will have greater meaning. Sharing how your experiences have shaped your decisions is one of the best ways to develop your staff and help them grow in their leadership capacities.

Drawing on this concept, allow others to share their experiences that can inform decisions that are being made. This respect for others' opinions also sends the message that "we are all in this together." When your team knows the authentic leader cares about and respects them personally, then they can devote their energy to creativity, innovation, performance and productivity.

To summarize, the authentic leader's approach should be inclusive, intended to encourage the building of positive relationships within the workforce. Foster an atmosphere of openness where individuals are recognized for their contribution and any success is shared. Through consistent respectful behavior and communication styles, an authentic leader builds trust throughout the workforce.

About the Author

Dr. Ann Gatty is a business development strategist. She helps her clients clarify the vision for their businesses, boost their leadership capabilities and add quality talent to help the clients reach their goals. Through a collaborative mentoring process, she and her clients create workable strategic business plans and success initiatives, while improving their workplace processes. Dr. Gatty is a frequent writer and contributor www.AllBusiness.com, www.MarketingInsiders.com, and www.WomenOnBusiness.com. Her interactive speaking engagements assist participants in discovering new-found talents and skills that they can immediately apply in the workplace. Join her [Facebook Group, Strategic Thinking Summit Elites](#) for strategies you can implement to grow your business success and enjoy camaraderie with others entrepreneur members.