

Journal of Human Resource & Leadership



Leadership: Where Credibility and Authenticity Integrate Organization

Ogochi K. Deborah

ISSN NO: 2616-8421

Leadership: Where Credibility and Authenticity Integrate Organization

Ogochi K. Deborah

Pan Africa Christian University

How to cite this article: Ogochi K., D. (2018). Leadership: Where Credibility and Authenticity Integrate Organization. Journal of Human Resource & Leadership, Vol 2(5) pp. 90-100.

Abstract

It is evident that credibility and authenticity are integrated and every leader that does what they do begins in their mind, and this will be articulated in their words, which will be translated into their actions. Over time those actions become who they are, determining the credibility they earn and shape the legacy they leave behind (Kouzes & Posner, 2011). Honesty remains the most important leadership attribute. It is evident that this is how leaders earn respect from their employees. Such leaders do what they say and deliver on their commitments and promises. Credible leaders are forward looking and they know how to communicate a clear and convincing vision of how things could and should be done. They are dynamic, inspiring, enthusiastic, optimistic, uplifting and positive (Kouzes & Posner, 2003). Such leaders are equally competent, having a winning track record with the skills and techniques to get the job done.

Key words: *Leadership, Credibility & Authenticity.*

Leadership: Where Credibility and Authenticity Integrate

Every leader that does what they do begins in their mind, and this will be articulated in their words, which will be translated into their actions. Over time those actions become who they are, determining the credibility they earn and shape the legacy they leave behind (Kouzes & Posner, 2011). Furthermore, honesty remains the most important leadership attribute. It is evident that this is how leaders earn respect from their employees. Such leaders do what they say and deliver on their commitments and promises. According to Mineo (2014), trust is the adhesive that

puts together the leader to his/her followers, providing the capacity for organizational and leadership success. “Honesty is absolutely essential to leadership. If people are going to follow someone willingly, whether in battle or into the boardroom, they first want to assure themselves that the person is worthy of their trust” p (24)

Principles for Credible Leaders

Credible leaders are forward looking and they know how to communicate a clear and convincing vision of how things could and should be done. They are dynamic, inspiring, enthusiastic, optimistic, uplifting and positive (Kouzes & Posner, 2003). Such leaders are equally competent, having a winning track record with the skills and techniques to get the job done. Moreover, Mineo (2014) postulates that “People everywhere want to believe in their leaders. They want to have faith and confidence in them as people. People want to believe that their leaders’ words can be trusted, that they have the knowledge and skills necessary to lead, and that they are personally excited and enthusiastic about the direction in which they are headed” p (87).

Credible leaders stimulate faithfulness and commitment in their employees and followers. According to Tucker and Russell (2004) it is the credibility of the leader that will determine whether employees will volunteer a little bit of their extra time, energy, intelligence, talent creativity, experience and support so that they accomplish substantial development levels. Some managers threaten their employees with the loss of jobs if they do not get to their expectations. Power, threats and position will not earn any commitment from employees. They earn compliance and compliance yields adequacy and not greatness.

To earn and sustain credibility, a leader should discover him/herself (Kouzes & Posner, 2011). The leader needs to know what he/she believes in, what he/she stands for, should weigh him/herself to know if he/she has the confidence to deliver and needs to know if he/she has the will and skill to persist in the face of adversity and uncertainty. Furthermore, such a leader should appreciate his/her constituents because “leadership is a dialogue and not a monologue”. People are more likely to trust and follow that leader who has the followers’ best interests at heart.

This leader should also affirm shared values. Well-regarded leaders possess a skill for staking out of common ground, which is commonly known as ‘can all stand and get along with one another’. Such a leader develops capacity to lead the organization to realize its vision. Russell and Gregory Stone (2002) assert that “People cannot contribute to the aims and aspirations of an

organization if they do not know what to do, and they cannot contribute if they do not know how to do it” p. 34. A credible leader serves a purpose in the sense that he/she understands that leadership is a service and not greatness (Kouzes & Posner, 2003). Leaders exist to serve a purpose for the people who made it possible for him to lead.

This leader must sustain hope in his/her followers by always having an upbeat attitude which is of great importance in turbulent times (Tucker & Russell, 2004). Leaders with high hopes usually have higher ambitions and higher levels of performance. In addition to that, such a leader should be personally present for their employees and stakeholders during tough and rough times (Walker & Pagano, 2008). A leader who possesses these principles will be admired by employees, stakeholders and followers. The leader will earn their trust, gain their respect, win their support and they will help and support the leader to do amazing things that will leave a remarkable legacy.

Berkowitz (2003) posit that, “all credibility, all good conscience, all evidence of truth come only from the senses”. Further he defines credibility as “a psychological and social state that exists when people believe in that is being said or done and give credit to people on the basis of the consistency between their words and deeds” p. (23). The core distinctive of credibility is belief. In other words, people assume that a leader who is stating something, making an assessment of a situation or carrying out an action is trustworthy.

Thus, a credible leader should ask him/herself if he/she trusts him/herself. This requires keen self-reflection about those significant standards that drive the leaders’ attitudes and behaviors. For such a leader to manage his/her credibility, he/she must regularly interrogate his/her integrity to ensure the standards are maintained. It is not possible to sustain credibility without some understanding of the influence of power on the leader’s understanding of self.

The second essential question to ask oneself is if people trust you as a leader. This happens to be the hardest question to answer since more often than not; people tend to tell the leaders what they think they want to hear and not the reality. The last question to ask oneself is if you as a leader you trust your followers. The answer to this question is very critical because it will significantly determine the style of leadership suitable to employ in given situations.

Principles of Authentic Leadership

The most vital component concerning authenticity as a leader is to understand the characters and standards that are fundamental to you as a leader and manifest them consistently. For any leader to lead authentically, he/she must know him/herself (Cooper, Scandura, & Schriesheim, 2005). This means that authenticity begins and ends with having an understanding of whom one is, how he/she wants to be perceived by other people and what one aspires to be. By understanding best what one wants to be, will allow an individual to manifest his/her ideal authentic behaviors (Avolio & Luthans, 2005). In order to well understand oneself, there is need to get a better idea of who you are and who you want to be, get feedback and ask yourself some vital questions, identify role models, admired leaders and the specific traits that these individuals embody (Caldwell & Hayes, 2016).

The second aspect of authenticity is being oneself and not being a jerk (Nilson, 2016). Being authentic is not a certificate to oppress others, be loathsome and make the lives of others worse because you are being who you are. The third aspect is that; a leader should not say that he/she is being authentic. Always the leader should coach his/her communication and actions in saying that one is coming from a place of authenticity is as bad as saying, 'can I be honest with you?' Furthermore, a leader should not force his/her brand of authenticity on others because one's authentic traits may not be like those of the people around him/her. (Cooper et al., 2005). Finally, consistent behavior and deeds not words is a sure manifestation of one's authenticity (Jungert, 2009).

Authenticity Leadership by Klenke

According to Avolio, Gardner, Walumbwa, Luthans, and May (2004), authentic leaders are those people who are deeply cognizant of how they behave, think and are perceived by others as being conscious of their own and other individuals' values, morals, perspectives, strength and knowledge. They are aware of the setting in which they function, they are hopeful, confident, resilient, optimistic, and have high moral character. Authentic leadership shows some overlay with other modern viewpoints like charismatic, transformational, spiritual, and servant leadership. But, the difference is gaining legitimacy in its own rights.

Further, Avolio and Luthans (2005) postulate that authentic leadership can then include transformational, spiritual, servant, charismatic or other forms of positive leadership. Though,

authentic leaders may not necessarily be transformational or charismatic, in its place, they have the ability to impact follower awareness from a moral viewpoint and strengthen them by generating meaning and positively creating reality for themselves and followers alike. Avolio et al. (2004) contend that the core component distinguishing authentic leadership from the other related kinds of leadership is the vital of what constitutes deeply positive leadership in whatever form it exists.

Additionally, Avolio et al. (2004) continue to argue that the focus of authentic leadership is on positivity, transparency and high ethical standards. Furthermore, authentic leaders are anticipated to induce followers' self-concept, recognizing that they share similar values with the leader.

Modelling the Authentic Leadership Construct

Hannah, Avolio, and Walumbwa (2011) came up with the first formal statement of authentic leadership by suggesting a theoretical concept that draws from positive behavior, contemporary work on leadership, trust, emotions and identity theory to describe the process by which leaders apply their influence on followers' attitude. Avolio and Gardner (2005) suggested a self-based concept of the processes undergirding authentic leadership and followership. The model postulates that the key aspect contributing to the progress of authentic leadership is the self-awareness of the leader, which includes his/her emotions, values and goals. Another theoretical pillar of this model is self-regulation, which includes, internalized regulation, authentic behavior, balance processing of information which refers to the unbiased collection and interpretation of self-related information, and rational transparency which relates to the leader displaying high levels of self-disclosure, openness and trust in close relationships.

This model further suggests that the leader's personal history and core trigger events are qualifications for authentic leadership. As positive role models, authentic leaders demonstrate commitment and integrity to vital ethical values and contribute to a positive organizational climate that will lead to positive outcomes for authentic leader-follower relationships that lead to high levels of followers' trust, work place well-being, veritable and justifiable performance (Avolio & Gardner, 2005).

Ilies, Morgeson, and Nahrgang (2005) progressed a concept of authentic leader and follower development that focused on the components of authenticity and the procedures whereby authentic leadership donates to the eudemonic well-being of leaders and followers. This model

postulates that authenticity is an introspective yet relational model that has considerable inferences for leadership processes influencing the leader's own well-being and impacting their followers' well-being and self-concept.

Lastly, Klenke (2005) suggested an authentic leadership model that assimilates cognitive, effective, spiritual and contextual components. This model also treats self as a vital feature of authentic leadership. In addition to counting self-efficacy and self-esteem by Gardner, Avolio, Luthans, May, and Walumbwa (2005), Klenke model openly includes the spiritual aspect as a determinant of authentic leadership. While Avolio et al. (2004) proposed that authentic leadership may incorporate ethical and spiritual leadership, (Klenke, 2005) theorized that spirituality which is defined as self-sacrifice, a sense of meaning and purpose and self-transcendence truly serve as a predecessor of authentic leadership.

This model unlike the other approaches openly includes organizational context in the form of authentic leadership cultures as potential outcomes of authentic leadership. As declared somewhere else leadership is shaped by context (Van Engen, Van der Leeden, & Willemsen, 2001). In all forms of leadership, circumstantial aspects set the limits within which leaders and followers interact and determine the demands and constraints placed on them as they contextualize their attitudes, actions, emotions, behaviors and spiritual choice (Klenke, 2005).

From the four models of authentic leadership discussed above, authentic leaders are anchored in their strong sense of self, ranging from the center to the edge. This can be summarized by the following 'self' characteristics as observed in the four models; self-awareness and self-regulation that are directly linked to follower outcome; self-realization, self-development, self-esteem and self-efficacy that are linked to the leader's eudemonic well-being. Self can further be operationalized as a facet of personal identification (Avolio et al., 2004) or as a cognitive that is self-knowledge, conative which means self-motivation or spatiality that is self-sacrifice and self-transcendence (Klenke, 2005).

Klenke (2005) aspect of spirituality in authentic leadership, usher us into what (Oginde, 2011) says on spirituality and leadership where he identifies with 1Timothy 3:1-7 in identifying the antecedents of Christian leadership as a requirement of the overseer that is, the highest level of leadership in the 21st century. Christian leadership though an occupation that is desirable, should be seen as a selfless and sacrificial calling for service to others. Christian leadership demands that

the leader must be disciplined in character and should maintain high moral standards. This particular type of leadership is identified with a commitment to self-control, mastery of passions and practicing limits where violent temper, money and wine are concerned. Moreover, the Christian leader should possess a proven track record at home and in the public ground. “According to Paul, these are antecedents – irreducible minimums – for successful leadership” p. (30).

Paul’s Arguments

The characteristic of a credible leader as per Paul’s argument are summarized in Galatians 5:22-23 “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentles and self-control”. Every leader should embrace this marvelous list of inward qualities and evaluate him/herself against each one of them as follows;

Love – is your leadership motivated by love for people or by selfish ambitions that lead to seeing your employees and treating them as lesser beings. If you need credibility, be straight and loving. Love is an inner characteristic of a person manifested in service to others (Crowther, 2017).

Joy – Do you exhibit an unshakable joy, regardless of life’s circumstances? Joy is an inner feeling of delight in a person that is not dependent on the happenings around. Leadership can be trying but joy keeps one going together with his followers (Crowther, 2017).

Peace – Do people see your peace and take courage? Peace is an inner quality that carries important characteristics for leadership like courage, confidence, single-mindedness, composure and the ability to bring progress amidst pressure (Collins, 2006). Acts 27:34-36 encourages leaders to be a good source of encouragement to their followers.

Long-suffering – Do you wait patiently for results as you develop people or even goals? Horn (2005) postulates that patience emerges to be one of the most desired value at work. In the organizational landscape, patience is an important trait of leadership. The humility that comes with patience of leaders will lead an organization to greatness as this organization will be positioned to serve (Rentfrow, 2007).

Kindness – Are you caring and understanding? Kindness is actually the activity of love with an emphasis on the gentleness of character that brings forth pure intentions for the actions it will take (Crowther, 2017). A credible leader will always show care to his followers in a genuine

and real way without pretense. He/she will show appreciation, will listen thoughtfully and is empathetic (Winston, 2003).

Goodness – Do you want the best for others and the organization? According to Horn (2005), goodness is a quality of moral excellence and uprightness which flows from the leader's character. Good character is of key importance to leadership and should go beyond a desire to do good and extend to living a consistent moral life that can be testified by others (Collins, 2006). This is what credibility is all about.

Faithfulness – Do you keep your commitment? People who are loyal and dependable, who can be counted on to fulfil their responsibilities are said to be faithful (Cooper et al., 2005). This is the attribute that defines a person whose loyalty can be depended, whose faithful service can be relied on and whose word can be accepted without any reservation (Fung, 1988). Faithfulness is a vital ingredient in becoming an effective leader and in establishing loyalty among followers (Kouzes & Posner, 2011). Furthermore, this quality is called credibility because the leader has actions that are consistent with the spoken words, promises are fulfilled and whatever is said, is usually done at the due time (Walker & Pagano, 2008). When followers realize that their leaders possess this quality, they get more committed to the organization, having a sense of ownership and a strong sense of team spirit.

Gentleness – Is your strength under control? Can you be both tough and tender? Gentleness is a quality of considerate friendliness; in other words, it is being meek. This strength accommodates another person's weakness (Kouzes & Posner, 2003). This describes a way of responding in turbulence without offence. A leader with this attribute will pardon injuries, correct mistakes and rule his/her own spirit well (Collins, 2006). A leader should be gracious and humble in relationships in spite of his power. He/she should be able to correct without being harsh or judgmental. Followers will be more willing to follow a person they trust. Therefore, a leader should trust others if he/she needs to be trusted (Kouzes & Posner, 2011)

Self-control – Are you disciplined to make progress towards your goals? Philippians 3:13-14 should be your motivation "Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: forgetting what is behind and straining towards what is a head, I press on towards the goal to win prize for which God has called me".

Conclusion

It is evident that credibility and authenticity are integrated and every leader that does what they do begins in their mind, and this will be articulated in their words, which will be translated into their actions. Over time those actions become who they are, determining the credibility they earn and shape the legacy they leave behind (Kouzes & Posner, 2011). Honesty remains the most important leadership attribute. It is evident that this is how leaders earn respect from their employees. Such leaders do what they say and deliver on their commitments and promises. Finally, 'self' is at the center of leadership which greatly determines what kind of leader an individual will make.

References

- Avolio, B. J., & Gardner, W. L. (2005). Authentic leadership development: Getting to the root of positive forms of leadership. *The leadership quarterly*, 16(3), 315-338.
- Avolio, B. J., Gardner, W. L., Walumbwa, F. O., Luthans, F., & May, D. R. (2004). Unlocking the mask: A look at the process by which authentic leaders impact follower attitudes and behaviors. *The leadership quarterly*, 15(6), 801-823.
- Avolio, B. J., & Luthans, F. (2005). *The high impact leader: Authentic, resilient leadership that gets results and sustains growth*: McGraw Hill.
- Berkowitz, R. (2003). Nietzsche's Task: An Interpretation of Beyond Good and Evil. *Journal of Politics*, 65(3), 914-916.
- Caldwell, C., & Hayes, L. A. (2016). Self-efficacy and self-awareness: moral insights to increased leader effectiveness. *Journal of Management Development*, 35(9), 1163-1173.
- Collins, J. (2006). Level 5 leadership: The triumph of humility and fierce resolve. *Managing Innovation and Change*, 234.
- Cooper, C. D., Scandura, T. A., & Schriesheim, C. A. (2005). Looking forward but learning from our past: Potential challenges to developing authentic leadership theory and authentic leaders. *The leadership quarterly*, 16(3), 475-493.
- Crowther, S. S. (2017). The Fruit Of The Spirit In The Context Of Leadership. *Gospel Perspectives Of The Leadership Of Jesus*, 7(1), 24-34.

- Fung, R. Y. (1988). *The epistle to the Galatians* (Vol. 9): Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing.
- Gardner, W. L., Avolio, B. J., Luthans, F., May, D. R., & Walumbwa, F. (2005). "Can you see the real me?" A self-based model of authentic leader and follower development. *The leadership quarterly*, 16(3), 343-372.
- Hannah, S. T., Avolio, B. J., & Walumbwa, F. O. (2011). Relationships between authentic leadership, moral courage, and ethical and pro-social behaviors. *Business Ethics Quarterly*, 21(4), 555-578.
- Horn, T. W. (2005). Developmental processes critical to the formation of servant leaders in China.
- Ilies, R., Morgeson, F. P., & Nahrgang, J. D. (2005). Authentic leadership and eudaemonic well-being: Understanding leader–follower outcomes. *The leadership quarterly*, 16(3), 373-394.
- Jungert, T. (2009). *Self-efficacy, motivation and approaches to studying: A longitudinal study of Y and how engineering students perceive their studies and transition to work*. Linköping University Electronic Press.
- Klenke, K. (2005). The internal theatre of the authentic leader: Integrating cognitive, affective, conative and spiritual facets of authentic leadership. *Authentic leadership theory and practice: Origins, effects and development*, 3, 155-182.
- Kouzes, J. M., & Posner, B. (2003). *Credibility*. San Francisco: Josey-Bross.
- Kouzes, J. M., & Posner, B. Z. (2011). *Credibility: How leaders gain and lose it, why people demand it* (Vol. 244): John Wiley & Sons.
- Mineo, D. L. (2014). The Importance of Trust in Leadership. *Research Management Review*, 20(1), n1.
- Nilson, L. B. (2016). *Creating Self-Regulated Learners: Strategies to Strengthen Students' Self-Awareness and Learning Skills* (Keynote Address).
- Oginde, D. A. (2011). Antecedents of Christian leadership: a socio-rhetorical analysis of 1 Timothy 3: 1-7. *Journal of Biblical Perspectives in Leadership*, 3(2), 23-31.
- Rentfrow, T. J. (2007). Effective leadership within a multinational environment. *Leadership Advance Online*, 10, 1-8.

- Russell, R. F., & Gregory Stone, A. (2002). A review of servant leadership attributes: Developing a practical model. *Leadership & Organization Development Journal*, 23(3), 145-157.
- Tucker, B. A., & Russell, R. F. (2004). The influence of the transformational leader. *Journal of Leadership & Organizational Studies*, 10(4), 103-111.
- Van Engen, M. L., Van der Leeden, R., & Willemsen, T. M. (2001). Gender, context and leadership styles: A field study. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, 74(5), 581-598.
- Walker, K., & Pagano, B. (2008). Transparency: The clear path to leadership credibility. *The Linkage Leader*, 1, 1-5.
- Winston, B. (2003). Extending Patterson's servant leadership model. Retrieved April, 12, 2008.