

EMCC

European Mentoring &
Coaching Council



20th Annual Mentoring and Coaching Conference

21-23 November 2013 – Athens, Greece

Mentoring/Coaching: The Next Decade

Coaching for Authentic Leadership

Tim Bright

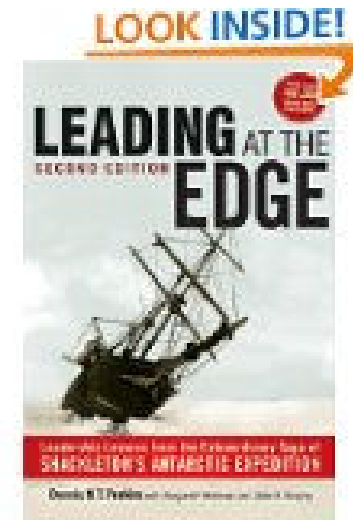
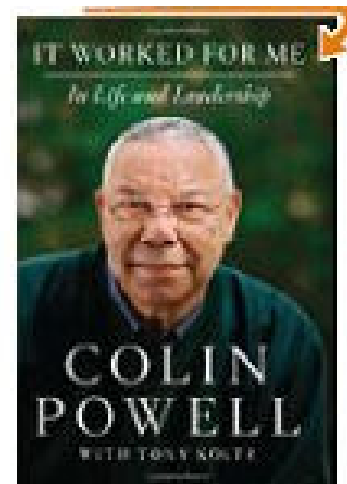
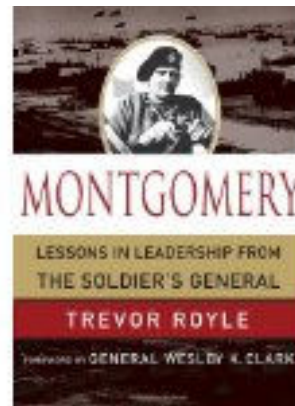
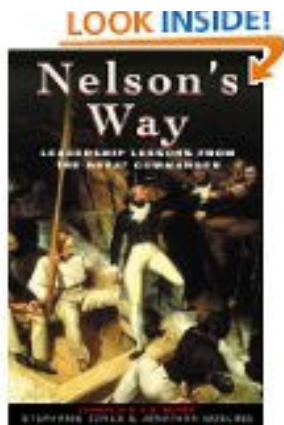
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Session Outline

- ◆ Different views on Authentic Leadership
- ◆ Goffee & Jones view “Managed Authenticity”
- ◆ Applications in Coaching
- ◆ Different views of the self
- ◆ Discussion

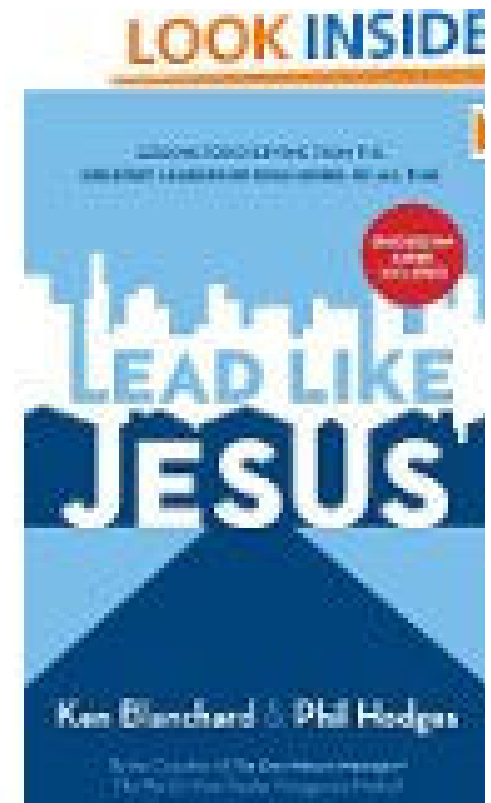
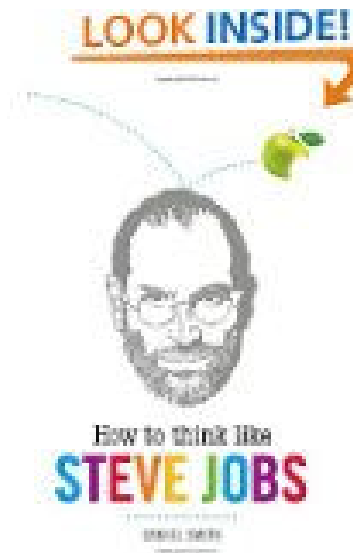
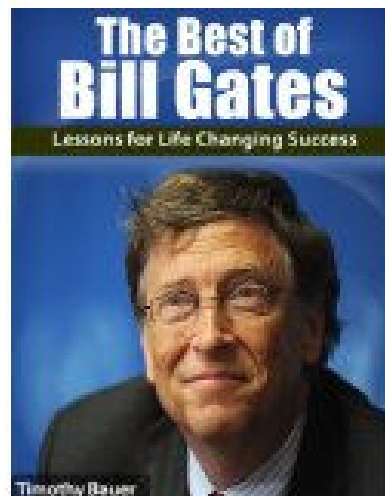
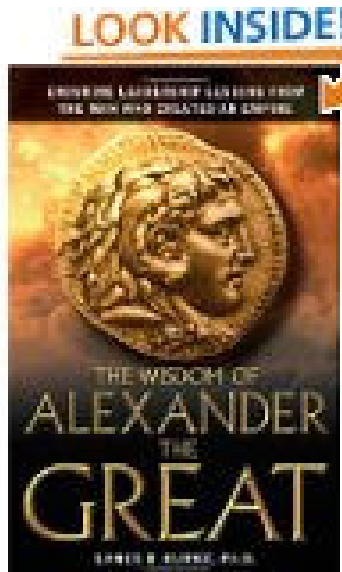
What is a Leader?

- At the most basic level “someone with followers”
- So we need to think about the followers’ perceptions.
- Who is worth following?
- We want to follow ‘real’ people, whom we see as authentic. Not robots or fakes.



The Leadership Industry

- “Lead like.....”
- Religious figures, sports heroes, business leaders

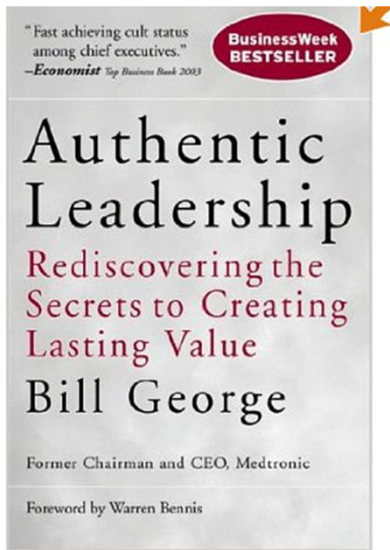


The problem is...

- We haven't found the keys to great leadership.
- It seems to be different across industries, situations and cultures.
- No common factors amongst these successful leaders.
- Except, perhaps, one.
- **Leaders who are sustainably successful are authentic, they are themselves. They know, and we know, who they are.**

So what does 'authentic' mean?

- Greek *authentikos* "original, genuine, principal"
- "Of the same origin as claimed; genuine."
- "Conforming to reality and therefore worthy of trust, reliance, or belief."
- "true to one's own personality, spirit, or character"



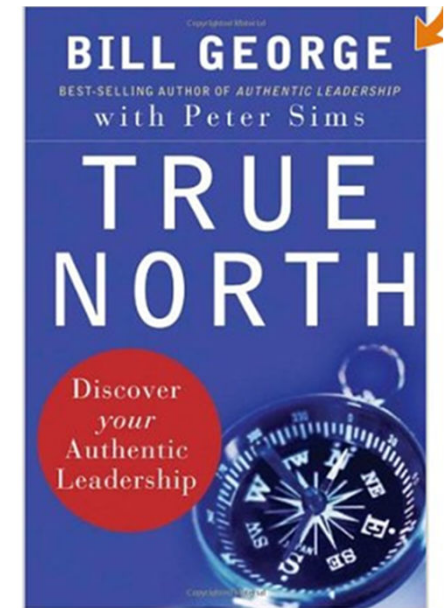
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Authentic Leadership

- Dominant approach – Bill George and Warren Bennis
- George (2003) - businesses that survive and flourish for the long term are authentic, sharing five characteristics –
 - a clear purpose
 - strong values
 - leading with heart (demonstrating passion)
 - engaging in effective relationships
 - demonstrating self-discipline

Exploring this 'authentic leadership'

- George says companies must have a meaningful purpose, examples often come from the healthcare sector
- Bill George from Medtronic, Merck and J&J often used as examples.
- It's easier for your company to have a meaningful purpose if your products save lives.



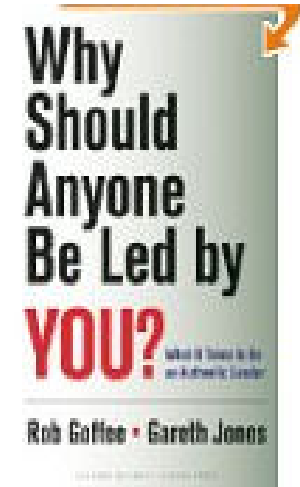
Exploring this 'authentic leadership'

- Also there are assumptions of goodness built into this –
- "Your True North represents who you are as a human being at your deepest level, your most cherished values, your passions and motivations, and the sources of satisfaction in your life. When you follow your True North, your leadership will be authentic, and people will naturally want to associate with you"
- "Your True North begins with the gifts you were given at birth by your Creator."

<http://www.billgeorge.org/page/the-spirituality-of-authentic-leadership>

Critique of Bill George's approach

- This is an essentialist approach, based on the belief that we have an essential self, a 'true north'.
- For many writers it's a religious approach.
- It's a consistent view, we are fundamentally good - and if we act in accordance with that we'll do good things and be good leaders.
- As coaches we must be aware of the assumptions in the approaches we use.



An alternative approach – Managed Authenticity

- Rob Goffee and Gareth Jones, a series of books and articles.
- **“Why should anyone be led by you?”** (HBR, 2000)
- Looking at leaders who inspire. Four qualities in authentic leaders -
 - Selectively show weaknesses
 - Use intuition to guide actions
 - Demonstrate ‘tough empathy’
 - Reveal their differences.
- **“Be yourselves - more - with skill.”**
- There can be no advice more difficult to follow than that.”

Managing Authenticity

- Goffee & Jones 2005 *Harvard Business Review* article.
 - You can't lead successfully by copying someone else.
 - Authenticity is not innate it's relational. It's attributed to you by others.
 - The challenge of leadership is to manage your authenticity.
-
- Manage the perception
 - Know yourself and others
 - Use where you come from
 - Conform, but only just enough

A paradox or a balance?

- “Effective leadership involves a complex balancing act between using your authentic differences and adapting your behaviours to context. Being authentic is not about being the same all the time. The most effective leaders are authentic chameleons. The chameleon always adapts to context but remains a chameleon.”

(Goffee & Jones)

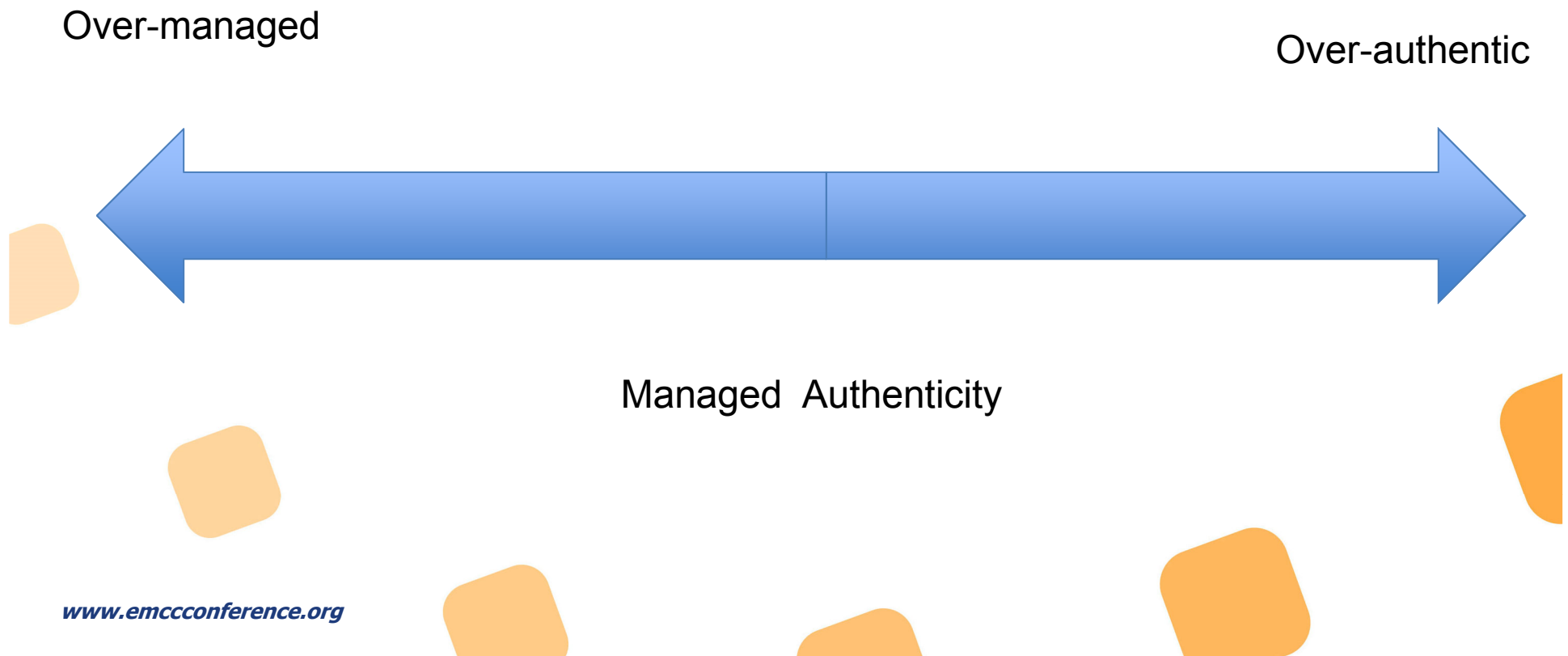
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So how can we use this in coaching?

See authenticity as a continuum, not black and white



Help coachees explore their own authenticity

- As coaches, help people to tell their own authentic story.
“When we know the facts about people, we know what they are. When we know their stories, we know *who* they are.” (John Quincy Adams)
- Talk through their biographies with coachee, reflect on what stands out.
- What makes them different? Raise awareness of self and values.
- What weaknesses can they share? (See Brene Brown and Patrick Lencioni on the power of vulnerability).
- Help them explore ‘tough empathy’ and managing distance.
- Encourage them to develop their intuitions and use them.
- Support them as they build their own style, rather than copying someone else’s. Focus on their differences.
- Remember authenticity is judged by others, not ourselves.

Wall metaphor – what should others know about you?

- Imagine a wall covered with facts about you. Your past, present, strengths, weaknesses, passions, hobbies, phobias.
- As a leader, choose from that wall what you want to share with your colleagues.
- What you share is authentic, because it's genuine, and it's managed because you are selecting what to share and what not to share.
- Share more of your self and your biography, so that people have a clear sense of who you are. We don't need to like our leaders but we do need to know who they are.

What should your organisation know about you as a person?

- For you to be successful, your team should know –
 1. Some things about you as a person. (not 'a black box')
 2. True things
 3. Consistent things (i.e. you present in a similar way to others)
 4. They should include humanising weaknesses
 5. Things that support your business priorities

- Particularly important for people in or preparing for new roles.

Implications & Paradoxes

- What does this say about our view of the self?
- Existentialist or Essentialist view of the self.
- Existentialist view that 'existence precedes essence' (Sartre) and we define ourselves through our actions.
- But if we believe in the existential approach, is there a self to be authentic to?
- And what about people being authentically bad or cruel?
- Authenticity is attributed to you by others, but we also know, in ourselves when we are being authentic or not. Intrinsic and extrinsic elements. But ultimate judgement is that of others (see Wittgenstein 'meaning as use' concept).

My personal view

- I think people can be authentically bad or evil, but it's very rare. Authentic doesn't equal 'good' or 'admirable'.
- We need to separate the terms 'authentic' and 'good'
- I do think most people are good and cooperative, due to the effects of evolution (see Robert Axelrod, *The Evolution of Cooperation*) But authentic and good are not the same thing.
- Many executives don't make enough of their own differences, and would benefit from sharing more of themselves at work.

My personal view

- In business we should be authentic because –
 1. It's the right thing to do
 2. We'll get found out if we are acting
 3. It takes too much energy to keep up an act
 4. We will only inspire others if we are authentic.

- Many coaches aim to help business people find their inner true (or higher) 'authentic selves' assuming that somehow as business people they are inauthentic. This is false and patronising and often contains strong unspoken assumptions about the nature of the self. Our role is to help people reflect on their own values, not change them.

Views of the self & the paradox of authentic leadership

- Donna Ladkin and Chellie Spiller - *When Does Acting Authentically become Plain Old Obstinacy?* (2013)

They discuss “the disquiet we feel with the notion of ‘authentic’ leadership when it is thought of as an enactment of the ‘inner’ self, or a way of being ‘true’ to oneself. ”

“at the same time that we worry about ‘authenticity’ and how it can be driven by self-centredness and ideology, we also recognise the importance humans place on being able to align their inner sense of value with their enacted self.”

- Ladkin and Spiller - Perhaps we can resolve this paradox with the notion of a **'self in progress'** which is more open, more flexible and primarily curious.
- Can we be "grounded in one's values, but open to the world and situation in which one finds oneself? ... is the self to which one might be committed a self that is in constant development, rather than being a once and for-all project?"
- "The perils of such a self is that it feels slippery. ... However, could there be liberation in the realisation of such a self? A freedom ... to grow and respond to the world, as well as to one's inner calling and directedness?"

Authentic Leadership is "that core understanding that lets itself be known between human beings in genuine dialogue, perhaps, or the embodied sense that there is more than 'façade' behind a person's stance."

What does authenticity mean for us as coaches?

- What is our role as an authentic coach? Authentic listener?
- We need to strike a balance between over-managed and over-authentic.
- We need to 'be ourselves, more, with skill.'
- The skill of when to be more actively present as ourselves in the dialogue and when to be less directive.
- Are we comfortable with our own weaknesses and differences, can we use them more?

Summary

- Authenticity is the one factor that inspirational leaders have in common. It is something that can be developed, and it's an important focus for coaching. It's about finding your own style, not copying others.
- Raising coachees' awareness of this issue can be very valuable. Helping them find a place on the continuum between over-managed and over authentic, and becoming more aware of their differences.
- There is a great risk of circularity in the definitions here. As coaches we must always question the assumptions in the ideas we use.
- Authentic Leadership is not an excuse for bad behaviour. It's not just about being spontaneous. It's be yourself, more, *with skill*.



Thank You

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