

Establishing Your Authenticity

There's no one right way to establish and manage your authenticity. But there are conscious steps you can take to help others perceive you as an authentic leader. Some of these steps entail building up knowledge about your true self; some involve learning more about others.

Get to know yourself and your origins better by:

- **Exploring your autobiography.** Familiarize yourself with your identity anchors – the people, places, and events that shaped you. Share these discoveries with others who have had similar experiences.
- **Returning to your roots.** Take a holiday with old friends. Spend time away from the normal trappings of the office.
- **Avoid comfort zones.** Step out of your routines, seek new adventures, and take some risks.
- **Getting honest feedback.** Ask for 360-degree feedback from close colleagues, friends, family and so on.

Get to know others better by:

- **Building a rich picture of your environment.** Don't view others as one-dimensional; find out about people's backgrounds, biographies, families, and obsessions.
- **Removing barriers between yourself and others.** Selectively show a weakness or vulnerability that reveals your approachability to your direct reports, assistants, secretaries, and so on.
- **Empathizing passionately with your people.** Care deeply about the work your people do.
- **Letting others know what's unique (and authentic) about them.** Give people feedback that acknowledges and validates their origins.

Connect to the organizations context better by:

- **Getting the distance right.** Be wary of creating the wrong first impressions. Use both your sense of self and your understanding of your origins to connect with, or to separate yourself from, others.
- **Sharpening your social antennae.** Seek out foreign assignments and other experiences to help you detect the subtle social clues that may spell the difference between your success and failure in attracting followers.
- **Honoring deeply held values and social mores.** You are unlikely to make connections by riding roughshod over other cultures' strongly held beliefs.
- **Developing your resilience.** You will inevitable experience setbacks when you expose yourself to new contexts and cultures. Prepare yourself by learning about and understanding your own values.