



Facilitating Performance Excellence & Meaningful Success within your Organisation!

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The Dangers of Feeling like an Organisational Fake

The following article was sent to me recently in support of the work I do with regards to the self-development of Authentic Leadership in organisations. It appeared in the Harvard Business Review in September 2005. The author is Professor Manfred F.R. Kets de Vries, and the title of the article is 'The Dangers of Feeling like a Fake', summarised as follows:

It states that 'many skilled, accomplished executives fear that they are not good enough – imposters who are bound to be found out. By undervaluing their talent, are they ruining their careers and companies?'

It continues that there are high achievers in organisations who believe that they are complete fakes. Despite their staggering achievements, these people subjectively sense that they are frauds, and that they therefore do not deserve their success. Typically this begins with their first job, right after graduation, and it becomes more prominent when they are then promoted, especially when promoted from technical to management position.

These are often perfectionist overachievers who then damage their careers by allowing their anxieties to trigger self-handicapping behaviour. This can have a ripple effect throughout a company, hurting not only the morale of colleagues, but also the bottom line.

This might vary by profession. For example, it is highly prevalent in academia and medicine, where the appearance of intelligence is vital to success. Specific family structures, for instance where

parents overinvest in achievement of children and where human warmth is lacking, can be breeding grounds for feelings of fake. Women who reach successful positions that conflict with their family of origin's way of thinking about gender roles are especially prone to feeling fraudulent.

This can lead to emotional paralysis; at the heart of the problem is the fear of success, in that success will hurt them in some way, that family and friends will stop liking them when becoming successful. This can lead to them becoming afraid to trust their own judgments or anyone else's. They often are perfectionists who set their goals too high, whilst they suffer from a lack of self-esteem and self-identity. Work /life balance is often a meaningless concept to them.

Kets de Vries suggests that the most appropriate way to manage these feelings of fraud is for you to evaluate yourself, maybe in partnership of a leadership coach who can help you on this journey of self-discovery and change.

This article was very meaningful to me, as I often experience in my coachees, who are in senior and executive levels in organisations, the exact symptoms as outlined in the article. I have found in my coaching that the development of authentic leadership as part of their coaching outcomes, helped them enormously to replace these feelings of fake with an appreciation of their authentic self, and therefore experiencing a considerable increase in their leadership effectiveness.

As one of my coachees recently said to me: '*Instead of trying to be who I think others want me to be, I have realised that I am the most powerful when I am my highest authentic self.*'

□ Development of Personal, Interpersonal and Professional Leadership

Development of Personal, Interpersonal and Professional Leadership

Recently, whilst attending a post-graduate leadership study school at a local university, I was reminded again of how often in organisations, individuals are promoted into positions of management and leadership because of their business or technical acumen. So why is it then that leadership still often falls short of expectations?

When problems surfaced at Enron, WorldCom, and others, the extent of the leadership crisis became apparent, creating a widespread erosion of trust in business leaders. I believe that what the world is looking for now, is a way of leading that is based on character and substance rather than style of leadership, integrity and stature, rather than image or position. It is about equipping leaders to rebuild trust, and to create the most compelling success for all stakeholders of their organisations.

My field and academic research conducted whilst coaching leaders over the last 5 years corroborated my belief that authentic leadership is the foundation of all effective and empowering leadership. It is about understanding what is meaningful in terms of what has shaped us to be who we are; about understanding the values, beliefs, thoughts and feelings that drive our behaviour. It is about exploring and knowing our purpose and vision, and what the legacy is that we wish to leave behind; about understanding how to use our inner resources available to get ourselves and teams to get to where we need to be. Finally, it is about developing intra-personal leadership skills as a foundation of interpersonal and professional leadership.

True leadership cannot be developed by attending training only. According to Kevin Cashman (2008), being able to lead self and others with authenticity and awareness often requires a transformational journey 'where we need to explore the internal identity that drives us; where we need to integrate all of life's experiences into a meaningful context'.

Adrian Chan (2005) shares four working assumptions regarding the requirements of effective authentic leadership development interventions, as follows. They need to be:

1. Targeted and customised.
2. High frequency and micro interventions.
3. Self-reinforcing interventions over time.
4. Multilevel, nested interventions.

□ Moya's Value-Add Offerings

□ PhD research in Leadership Development

Moya's Value-Add Offerings

✚ **One-to-one and team leadership and executive coaching.** we offer one-to-one coaching for senior management and leadership, who are either in transition, or wishing to achieve more meaningful success. It is our belief that to be an authentic leader, each one of us needs to be able to truly understand lead ourselves before we can be successful in leading others.

✚ **Consulting.** We are able to assist organisations in various areas, such as how to create a coaching culture within an organisation. What often stops organisations from moving to the next level, is the fact that whilst the technical skills might be in place at senior levels within the organisation, the intra-personal and interpersonal leadership and communication and relationship skills are not necessarily as developed. We also advise on appropriate interventions towards leadership development.

✚ **Programmes:** such as 'Manager as leader coach' and 'Developing Leadership Authenticity'. More and more organisations are realising the value of their people, and that there is a better and more empowering way of managing and leading self and others towards better performance in the workplace. There is a strong link between **leadership effectiveness** and **bottom-line performance**.

PhD research in Leadership Development

Should you wish to find out more about my PhD research in the development of Authentic Leadership in South African organisation, or should your organisation be potentially interested in participating in my research, then please contact me so that we can explore this further.



Warm Regards

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