

a new boss? Are you ready to be a new leader? As a new leader, you will look inside yourself to unlock the hidden treasures of your power and serve others by inspiring them to discover and explore their individual gifts. You will become a leader of leaders.

CHAPTER 7

Embrace Authenticity: The New Boss Lets Others Be Leaders

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Get Real. Get Power.

Here are two INpowerment principles:

The members of the team will sustain authenticity at the level of the leader.

The HEIGHT of a team's performance compared to its potential is directly related to the DEPTH of connection among its members.

These principles suggest that authentic connection is the key to maximizing performance of a team or organization, and that every member of the team, including the boss, will need to be open, accepting, and willing to participate in that cultural norm.

Authenticity is the gateway to the power of leadership. This is a new model for how an organization can change the culture of the company.

Eventually everyone, especially the boss, will need to embrace this cultural change as the team prepares to help lead the company. This change can only be integrated into the organization with everyone's participation.

The big idea here goes to the heart of INpowerment. In order to maximize the performance of the organization, each individual needs to show up and step into her or his power. The journey to full power starts with each member becoming real, becoming her or his authentic self and fully open to the known, unseen, and yet to be discovered. This way they are likely to develop bold ideas, clear vision, hindsight, foresight, and constructive and probative feedback.

Though simple, this cultural change is difficult to pull off. Because we're inviting everyone to come to work with their clothes turned inside-out—to reveal not only what they want to show or expect that we want to see, but also the parts of them (hopes and thoughts) that they may be afraid to bring forth. That kind of show-and-tell is awkward, challenging, scary, and even revolutionary. What if it backfires? What if it works?

When you are willing to let go of your self-limiting beliefs about why you need to hide behind your ideas and thoughts, you will open yourself up to the best version of you—the real you, your INpower.

Each individual will show up differently, of course. That's what we're hoping for—diversity. Yet, as each person shows up with authenticity, our similarities and differences will become manifest with attuned clarity, and the power in that dynamic will multiply. The creative breakthrough will come from the product of what we have in common and the hidden message in our differences—it takes all team members to be *real* for this cultural change to have impact.

This creates an opportunity for someone to lead the charge.

The NEW BOSS

This is a brave new world for the new boss as they continue to allow themselves to be a member of a team of leaders, not THE leader of a team. What once was a scary territory is now life-giving to both the boss and the team. The weight of carrying the burden of having to be right or to be the person with all the ideas and answers is now gone!

The shedding of this burden brings a new freedom for the boss to explore what they may need to focus on differently within the organization. The boss can worry less about what they have to give to their teammates in direction and ideas, and focus more on what they can take away from their teammates (through helping them remove barriers and blocks to their success). They are leading and the boss is engaged in making them the best that they can be in their roles.

This boss is engaged not just professionally in the lives of their team but personally. The boss has a genuine sense of respect and care for each individual they have the privilege to be working with. So the boss invested in them and they are invested back. Together, they are invested in the greater good of elevating each member of the team and achieving the deepest purpose of the organization.

The new leader looks forward to not just sharing the spotlight, but stepping out of it to shine it on their leadership team. The boss is excited to see the team fully embracing their greatness, as the boss leads them from behind. This is the only way for the boss to truly embrace their greatness, not because their job title gives them the authority, but because their leadership team is thriving and willing to follow them anywhere!

Together, in this new way of operating, the new boss and their team are accelerating the synergy and flow of the team's power.

Be an Easy Act to Follow

The best way for a boss to lead is to act as a role model by being authentic in the context of their role as a member of the team.

As a boss, they give open license to the team to actualize their presence by creating a safe place for the group to explore and discover as a team. The boss sets the highest bar in role modeling by actively listening or participating. As a member, the boss connects to their individual humanity by being vulnerable and communicating to others with empathy and understanding. The more leaders are able to challenge themselves to embrace both—showing their strength of courage, taking risks, aiming high, showing their vulnerability, opening their hearts, and revealing their fears—even in the face of seeming at odds, the deeper the team will be and the more it will achieve. Ironically, showing vulnerability actually strengthens the typical display of courage. This also means that the more shallow a team, the less it will achieve.

In our work, we often serve as role models of being authentic to make it easier for others who are unaccustomed to being vulnerable to follow our lead. We embrace our own philosophy by test-driving our practices before we introduce them.

So, without being directive, the boss can lead by example through their role as a member—just by being her or his authentic self. We saw this come to life with the automotive retailer highlighted in Chapter 2 during a three-day retreat. In our typical fashion, we started the retreat by inviting each participant to get present by checking in with what was on their mind and how they were feeling, as we sat in an open circle of chairs.

The CEO (the hierarchal boss) was sitting to my right. I checked in first to model the process, and then signaled to go counterclockwise. The boss—in his role as a participant—spoke vulnerably about his deep, profound fears and the magnitude of his hope that the team would make it out of the recession. He shared that he was afraid of

losing the company and the impact this would have on others. He was afraid of disappointing his family and all of the families he had touched through the workforce. He spoke about his worry that one of his bookkeepers, who was suffering from a chronic disease, would lose her health insurance. He began to weep tearfully and said he felt responsible. Then, his energy shifted a bit as he raised his head and spoke to his belief that the company would make it as long as everyone held on to the core purpose of why he started the business—the ideal “that every person matters.”

The other team members immediately connected with his fears and were in awe of his ability to also grasp his hope. His authenticity set the stage for all of the content that ultimately cascaded from the minds and hearts of the team. Suddenly, the accounting manager volunteered to help a Marketing VP with a client problem that had been looming for too long, and two coworkers, recently divorced (though neither had known about the other before the retreat), became supports for each other. That check-in exercise inspired the group to move from a circle of coworkers to a team of fellow human beings who deeply felt each other's pains and aspirations. The authentic connections bound them together in a winning belief and spirit for themselves and each other.

The boss began what was a pivotal year of fighting back—not just to survive but ultimately to thrive. The coherence of the team in its full power was birthed from the moment the CEO became human in the eyes and hearts of his teammates. He was easy to follow.

Everyone Embraces . . . Authenticity!

Ultimately, everyone must be IN! When the other members of the team embrace authenticity, they begin to aspire to their potential as leaders.

There is another INpowerment principle that emerges when the team realizes that authenticity, embraced by all, is the key to true power.

The total power of the team will only be limited by each individual leader's ability to step into his or her authentic self!

This creates a new and interesting growth curve for everyone. There should now be a pressure to "get real" and stay away from the superficial, creating what we call pseudo-community.

Pseudo-community is the place where all groups start and most groups operate. It's a place where meetings are kept to business issues, and after twenty years of working together, team members still don't know anything about their coworkers. Everyone is content coming together as a functional work group and feigning aspirations that arise from time to time so as to create a well-functioning team. As consultants, however, we differentiate that type of pseudo-community from what we consider authentic community.

Before a corporate offsite with the leadership team of a marketing communications firm, we spoke with each team member. During our prep calls, many expressed frustration over a team member who kept to himself and rarely spoke up. They boasted that everyone else was close. Yet, they had made no effort to expressly discuss any of their concerns or opinions with the detached team member or even among themselves. All they did was complain to us. This, we concluded, was a pseudo-community.

At the offsite, all of the team members began to open up, express their issues, and start to understand one another's journey. As they all began to connect with this "negative" team member, they began to see him as someone that had and was still experiencing significant loss in his life. A sense of empathy began to develop in the group. By the end of the retreat, he was completely embraced by the group. They circled the wagons around him to express their support and care. This team was now operating as an authentic community.

At the authentic community stage, everyone begins to see the superficial. When people fall back into old patterns, those patterns will be recognized as such. Teams that succeed on this journey support one another in staying authentic. As soon as one leader begins to shut down, there is a noticeable gap in the team's synergy and flow. So each leader holds themselves accountable by stepping into their discomfort with transparency while supporting the other leaders.

This support can look many different ways. It can be a helpful reminder to one another, or specific points of follow-up for each person. Once the team has had a taste of the power available through authentic connection, the contrast to the old mode of operating is stark. Those who struggle or are unwilling to make the shift to this way of operating will feel the strain. They will be pushed by this new operational modality—authenticity—to take the risks necessary to get out of their comfort zone and step into their power, or find their own graceful way to exit the team or company. This is an authentic evolution, because there are those who won't be able to make the journey. And that is perfect! He or she is being authentic by saying, "I don't belong here!" And the team is being authentic by supporting the idea that this person would be happier someplace else.

This is the same choice that a leader must make when the team and/or hierarchical boss is unwilling to embrace an authentic mode of operating. In that scenario, the leader is being authentic by choosing to leave the organization.

In the end, everyone must be IN!

Free to Lead

With everyone on the team working toward showing up fully and authentically, the new boss can actually engage with the team differently. They can focus on creating an environment where each member is free

to be a leader, opening up the gateway to maximize the potential of the team's performance.

One of our clients, a CEO who spent most of his time in the field leading the sales organization, was overwhelmed; he had little time to think about strategic growth and was frustrated with his company's sales trajectory. He was reluctant to step away as the de facto sales leader because he believed that revenue would fall. When we worked with the sales leadership team, we observed that team members felt stymied by the boss. Although they wanted to do more, they stepped back so as not to offend him—because when they attempted to step in, they felt rejected, hearing the unspoken message from the boss that he was better than they were.

We encouraged each of the members to express themselves, and invited them to participate in a visioning exercise to articulate the highest and best use of their time and talent. We asked the boss to go last. After he heard from the other team members, he had an insight about himself: he was dedicating most of his time to leading sales because of his fear of stepping up to lead strategic growth, and because of this limited belief, the whole team became stuck. With this revelation, and by accepting that this team wanted to do more and appreciating their hidden and untapped talent, he stepped away from sales, INpowered himself to step up to focus on strategy, and opened the door for others to lead.

Once a boss embodies her own internal power, this new model of INpowerment transforms the organization. The boss frees herself up from having to prove to everyone that she's right all of the time. The boss can make it safe for the one who has the breakthrough idea to come forward, or for the team to figure it out through mastering creative tension, or as appropriate to make the decision by herself. Moreover this opens opportunities for others to lead, and creates space for individual growth. For the organization, the field of opportunity expands with breadth and

depth of possibilities. The limitation of the hierarchy has been lifted, and everyone is free to lead.

Here's an INpowerment principle:

The best way for the boss to lead is to move over and invite everyone else to lead by stepping into their power.

Through INpowerment, the boss gives permission to each team member to bring to life the highest and best use of their time and talent. By INpowering each leader to lead, meetings will look and feel different. Previous meetings where the boss was required to bring the agenda and try to facilitate dialogue among the team will give way to each leader bringing content and/or agenda items to co-create the specifics of the agenda. Discussions led by functional heads that typically elicited halfhearted engagement will shift to lively discussions about each other's challenges and opportunities, because team members are connected, care, and are committed to bringing all that they have.

Additionally, they are deeply realigned around the purpose of the organization, allowing them to bring their power for benefit of the greater good. Border skirmishes and territorial behavior give way to embracing feedback and insights from every leader on the team. Concerns brought to each other's attention shift from being taken as personal attacks to being an expression of a mutual commitment to getting better and improving.

The new boss continues to shift focus to this new environment of authenticity. The boss's focus can now shift from being the person with all the answers to ensuring everyone's voice is in the discussion. They now look for places where leaders may be falling into old patterns of quietness or disengagement. Those all signal where efforts need to be focused to understand the resistance.

In fact, one way to consider a key role for the new boss is to create the freedom for each leader to actually be a leader. Historically, that may have been focused on skill development or to encourage the team to keep getting better in their functional areas. While that may still be appropriate, the primary focus day in and day out is for each leader to be INpowered to show up fully and completely with their voice.

When the culture of the company has begun to embrace authenticity, not just in the C-suite, and it's spreading like wildfire throughout the company from the head office to the cubicles and throughout the shop floor, everyone will become comfortable sharing. This is the authenticity that people are starving for . . . and, they will devour it. Now, the real revolution has begun!

CHAPTER 8

Time to Show Up: Start a Cultural Revolution in Your World

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Shoulder to Shoulder

AS MEMBERS OF the team embrace this new form of authenticity and it begins to flow into the rest of the organization, the culture of the organization will begin to change. This truly is a cultural revolution.

We are explicit to say “revolution” rather than “evolution,” because there is no halfway to the transformation that must take place among teams and throughout the organization. To embrace openness and operational transparency calls for fundamental shifts that shock the status quo. The only barrier to this change is fear—fear of failure, fear of inability to adapt to a new culture, and ultimately fear of the unknown. Yet, the unknown is exactly where growth lives and thrives. It is here that the revolution will take hold and deliver a new way of delivering more value to all stakeholders. This cultural revolution invites us to tear down the institutions that built and sustained those walls that were separating us from real human connection.