

Authentic Leadership

Authenticity. Vulnerability. Humility. Transparency. At risk of becoming business jargon buzzwords, these concepts carry much more value than they are often credited with. Hollywood helps us either admire or loathe the arrogant, supremely confident boss. Chomping expensive cigars, and roaring commands to subservient direct reports, this caricature of a typical boss is a little off the mark. But not that far off the mark...I don't think anyone wants to work with someone who is this inauthentic.

Owolabi starts his discussion of Authentic Leadership from the basis of understanding who are in our insecurities. Throughout his treatment of this Owolabi presents thoughts that recur in book after book, study after study. Owolabi is not parroting others, or plagiarizing here, not at all. On the contrary, his thoughts reinforce what we have learned about human behaviour and leadership. Simply this; we all have struggles and blind spots, most often these show up in some form of insecurity manifesting itself.

Owolabi is kind to all of us that struggle as he notes both those who understand their insecurities and those who do not. In either case, it radically affects our leadership and treatment of others. Some of us hide insecurities and even knowingly overcompensate for them. Others of us are blind to them, but still behave in unfavourable ways because of them. As our understanding of leadership continues to grow, so does the evidence supporting vulnerability, humility, and transparency.

Authentic Leadership covers some great ground and is a pretty quick read. The book's subsections start with The Insecure Leader, then The Authentic Leader, and finally, where the rubber hits the road, Becoming an Authentic Leader. Practicality abounds here in helping each of us realize our insecurities, and how to work through them. Insecurities are likely the reason we become inauthentic leaders, we are trying to hide our shortcomings and failures. The basis of this is holding us all back from getting closer to the best leaders we can be. I've heard it said that humility is understanding where you thrive, and where you do not. The road to authentic leadership begins when we are able to expose the things at which we do not thrive.

Owolabi covers the Four Stages of Competence, which summarizes our awareness and progress through some of these insecurities:

- **Unconscious Incompetence**
 - You don't know the skill; you don't know you don't have it
- **Conscious Incompetence**
 - You know the skill; you're not accomplished at it yet
- **Conscious Competence**
 - You know the skill; it's concerted effort
- **Unconscious Competence**
 - You know the skill; it's a second nature skill

The road to Authentic Leadership is a rough one, but Dan Owolabi provides a great foundation for getting a start.

(Credit Dan Owolabi, Authentic Leadership, Daniel Owolabi, 2020)

Available on Amazon