



PUT YOUR SPIRITUALITY TO WORK

Conversation Starters for the Workplace

3.20 LEADING OUT LOUD

The leader that people most trust, and follow, is the one who communicates authentically from the heart. *“Authenticity is a way of being as a leader, rather than things you do.”* (Terry Pearce, *Leading Out Loud*)

HAVE YOU EVER read a book title that had such a clear meaning that you naturally felt attracted to it? Our friend Terry Pearce, founder of Leadership Communication, wrote such a book. Its title, *Leading Out Loud: Inspiring Change through Authentic Communication*, captures the essence of what he has consistently found: the leader that people most trust, and follow, is the one who communicates authentically from the heart. As Terry says, the need for personal depth, openness and honesty is here to stay:

Authenticity calls us to respond. Authenticity is a way of being as a leader rather than things you do as a leader. Through a combination of introspection and discipline, you have to find your authentic voice and amplify it so that it resonates with those who follow you.

We can think of no better example than Amber Chand, co-founder of Eziba, a company that markets the products of artisans from around the world. In an interview, she told us:

As a co-founder of this company, I have a tremendous amount of influence, but I have not been interested in seeing it as power. It is a status and respect that I hold very humbly. I try to continually find ways to be that nurturing, reassuring, loving spirit for the employees. This allows me to authentically be my spirit-self. As a result I have been able to actually cultivate a great confidence in others by being more spiritual: they expect it of me, they see it in me, they laugh at me, they dismiss me, all of that.

For Terry, one of the greatest challenges is to be authentic in the midst of the most frightening, demanding times we face at work:

The change that is now required is no longer merely incremental; it is discontinuous, radical and frightening to those who participate. Leaders are faced with inspiring followers to jump this chasm with them. To inspire, the new leader must authentically engage in the issue at hand.

That’s exactly what Amber had to do in December, 2001:

We were restructuring the company and looking seriously at our goal of being a profitable organisation... which required us to let some people go. This was very painful for me. And yet, I had to be realistic about the early, start-up phase that we were in.

Terry details four principles for authentic leadership: faithful attention to what matters, courageous voicing of those values, developing the emotional intelligence to lead, and continual emphasis on connecting with others¹. Here's how Amber demonstrated that at an open forum with her employees:

We clearly expected people to express their distress, unhappiness, frustration and anger. There was a moment when one of our senior members became defensive and it sparked a battle between two wills; it was awful. Everyone looked so sad and devastated. At the end of this, there was just this silence.

I then very quietly stood in the centre of the room, looked around at everyone, and said, "I am so sorry. I apologise for the way this has turned out." At that moment the faces of the people began to soften and a spaciousness was created that let them know that this was not about us versus them. It was simply all part of the journey of this company.

The apology felt like a quiet, but powerful flame within me. It was a moment when I stretched inside; I felt as if I literally re-defined what a leader was meant to be. I have always known that I was here to serve and anytime I forget this, I lose my way. Without this faith, this spiritual source, I do not feel it would be possible to be an exemplary leader.

Thus, leaders who truly know themselves deeply, who draw from their own sense of vision and meaning, call forth that same depth and authenticity from those they lead...These are the true *leaders* who can inspire people to participate, even co-lead, major change.

So, ask yourself: *How can I touch into my deepest, most authentic self and communicate to those whom I lead? What would authentic communication be like for me as a leader right now?*

This article is an excerpt from the book, *Put Your Spirituality to Work: Spiritual-Based Leaders*. To download the full book of articles, as well as additional book chapters, articles, workbooks, and research on the subject of "spirituality and human values for leadership and work", visit our website: www.globaldharma.org

¹ To download an article that outlines the core principles and communication framework in *Leading Out Loud*, please visit: www.blessingwhite.com/Library/Press/AuthenticLeadership.pdf