Book Review

Emotional Intelligence: AUTHENTIC LEADERSHIP

By HBR Publishing

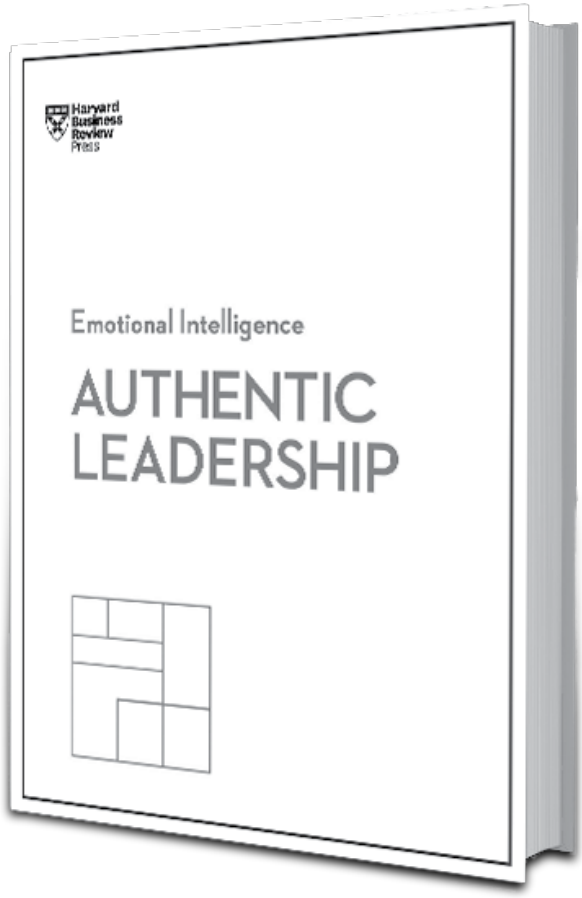
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Authors' profile

This book is a part of The HBR Emotional Intelligence Series, which features essential reading on the human side of professional life from the pages of Harvard Business Review. This particular book includes the scholarly work of Bill George, Peter Sims, Andrew N. McLean, Dian Mayer, Herminia Ibarra, Emma Seppala, Rob Goffee, Gareth Jones, Sylvia Ann Hewlett, Sarah Green Carmichael and Adi Ignatius.

Appreciation and Critique

This book explains the role of authenticity in emotionally intelligent leadership using lots of small cases, examples and situations. One will learn; how to discover one's authentic self, when emotional responses are appropriate, how conforming to specific standards can hurt and when one need to feel like a fake.

This is a collection of seven scholarly articles focused on the above theme, which are must read for everyone from the field of Human resource management and Organization Behavior and leaders particularly.

1. 'Discovering your authentic leadership – Why self-awareness is so critical' by Bill George, Peter Sims, Andrew N. McLean and Dian Mayer:

Interesting article that focus on discovering one's authentic leadership through conducting intensive interviews with wide range of leaders. Authentic leaders frame their life stories in ways that allow them to see themselves not as passive observers of their lives but rather as individuals who can develop self-awareness from their experiences. Authentic leaders act on that awareness by practicing their values and principles, sometimes at substantial risk to themselves. They are careful to balance their motivations so that they are driven by these inner values as much as by a desire for external rewards or recognitions. Authentic leaders also keep a strong support team around them, ensuring that they live integrated, grounded lives.

2. 'The authenticity paradox – To grow, you need to feel like a fake' by Herminia Ibarra:

Another interesting article that tries to decode what 'Adaptive Authenticity' really means and suggest some means to achieve that. Remaining authentic about who you are can be a recipe for staying stuck in the past. Leadership identity should change each time you move on to bigger and better things. To grow as leaders, one has to stretch the limits of who we are – doing new things that makes us uncomfortable but that teach us through direct experience who we want to become. Such growth doesn't require a radical personality makeover. Small changes – in the way we carry ourselves, the way we communicate, the way we interact – often make a world of difference in how effectively we lead.

3. 'What bosses gain by being vulnerable – The psychology of human connection' by Emma Seppala:

In this article, using live cases, author has tried to explain the advantages of embracing authenticity and vulnerability (the root of human connection) in every leadership role like; 'Your staff will see you as human being; they may be prompted to share advice; your team begins to feel more horizontal than vertical if you are part of hierarchical structure; etc.' Rather than feeling like another peg in the system, your team members will feel respected and honored for their opinions and will consequently become more loyal.

4. 'Practice tough empathy – When you care, you show your true self' by Rob Goffee and Gareth Jones:

In this article, author very clearly bring out the importance of tough empathy, quoting relevant examples, in the challenging roles of leadership. Such leaders not only communicate authenticity, which is the precondition for leadership, but they will show that they are doing more than just playing a role through empathizing with the people truly and deeply. Tough empathy means giving people what they need, not what they want.

5. 'Cracking the code that stalls people for color – Sacrificing identity to conform' by Sylvia Ann Hewlett:

In this article, author through the extensive research work brings out the issues related to Inclusivity, especially at the senior leadership roles. Manifestation of 'Executive Presence' characterized by Gravitas, communication skills and appearance - a code (key characteristics) written by and for white men, to be demonstrated by senior leaders, sometime act as a deterrent for men and women of color, i.e. African American, Asian, Hispanic and Caucasian. Because feedback is either absent, overly vague, or contradictory, executive presence remains an inscrutable set of rules for professionals of color – rules they are judged by but cannot interpret and embody except at considerable cost to their authenticity. Consequently, in a workplace where unconscious bias continues to permeate the corridors of power and leadership is mostly white and male, professionals of color are measurably disadvantaged in their efforts to be perceived as leaders. But winning in today's fiercely competitive global economy requires a diverse workforce that "matches the market".

6. 'For a corporate apology to work, the CEO should look sad – Make your emotions match your message' by Sarah Green Carmichael:

In this research-based article, author, using relevant examples tried to shed light on what makes some apologies effective and what make others backfire. The conclusion drawn by the author is that being honest and specific about the source of the problem while seeking apology not only cheers up investors, it likely helps the company turn around the issue more quickly. Conversely, the companies that blamed external factors were often vague and seen as less honest. Message delivered through this article by the author was 'when you mess up, admit it and look appropriately sad about it'.

7. 'Are leaders getting too emotional – Tears are OK if they're rare' by Adi Ignatius and Sarah Green Carmichael:

In this article, which is based on interview with Gautam Mukunda of HBS and Gianpiero Petriglieri of INSEAD, authors with relevant examples, convey the importance of being authentic when the leaders express their emotions and empathy – the leaders should feel the pain and concerns of his/her team and not just understanding the circumstances. Ability to think more deeply about what these feelings are telling you as a leader about what's happening to the people that you are responsible for and then articulate them (emotionally) in a way that is useful and befitting. Leader should be mindful about how he/she is expressing the emotions (outrage, anger, frustration, etc.) in different situations and ensure that the responses are appropriate, consistent and authentic.

In nut shell, the book (which is in fact a collection of scholarly articles) is a must read for all the leaders at all levels and the academicians/practitioners/researchers from the Human Resources and Organizational Behavior domain.

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