# Authentic Leadership

A leader has the responsibility of motivating and inspiring employees and their followers to achieve the most in their work settings. According to the theory of authentic leadership, the best leaders are perceived in terms of how they think about themselves and ways in which their behavior and actions reflect on the concept of ‘self’, which then leads to moral transformation for the leader and the followers. These leaders create an environment of shared beliefs, values and trust and encourage successful accomplishments through reward systems. As such, the success of an authentic leader is determined by their ability to possess a degree of self-awareness of his/her personal attributes including strengths and weaknesses (Alok, 2014.) This self-awareness is key to helping them make informed decisions.

One distinguishing trait of authentic leaders is their ability to establish trust among their followers. According to Northouse (2016), other distinguishing characteristics of authentic leaders exists along the dimensions of self-discipline, relationships, values, and purpose. There are also heart dimensions such as compassion, consistency, passion, connectedness, and behavior. Taking into account these personal traits, one of the leaders who can be perceived as an embodiment of authentic leadership is Abraham Lincoln. When standing against the southern states in the fight against slavery, he exhibited clarity in values, purpose, and heart. He did not mind gaining an immense opposition or dividing the nation as long as he believed he was on the right course.

Lincoln’s actions and behavior meant that he was morally upright and could not be compromised by any position that he thought was wrong. Doing so earned him trust among the multitudes, which got him a large followership. Worth noting is the fact that he did not take the political stand after analysis of the support he would gain from his followers or friends. He took it because he was convinced that it was the right decision to make, which resulted in building trust and respect for him. As Bennis (2009) notes, authentic leaders are not afraid to speak the truth or hear the truth regardless of how challenging it is to do so. As such, speaking the truth is something that Lincoln did, which makes him an authentic leader.

Following how Lincoln created trust and followership, business leaders can follow the approach of authentic leadership to improve organizations. The most important aspect of developing as an authentic leader is by defining the traits that can be nurtured for purposes of promoting a moral stance that can also be enumerated by the subordinates. By learning and practicing morality, relational transparency, and balanced perspectives, leaders can assure their followers that they will always do the right thing. This will help establish trust and followership, which can be used to promote organizational productivity. Trusted authentic leaders are able to nurture and motivate the employees to achieve their greatest levels of accomplishment for both personal and professional development. The development of the employees will ultimately lead to improvement in organizational output through quality utilization of employee skills and talents.

## References

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