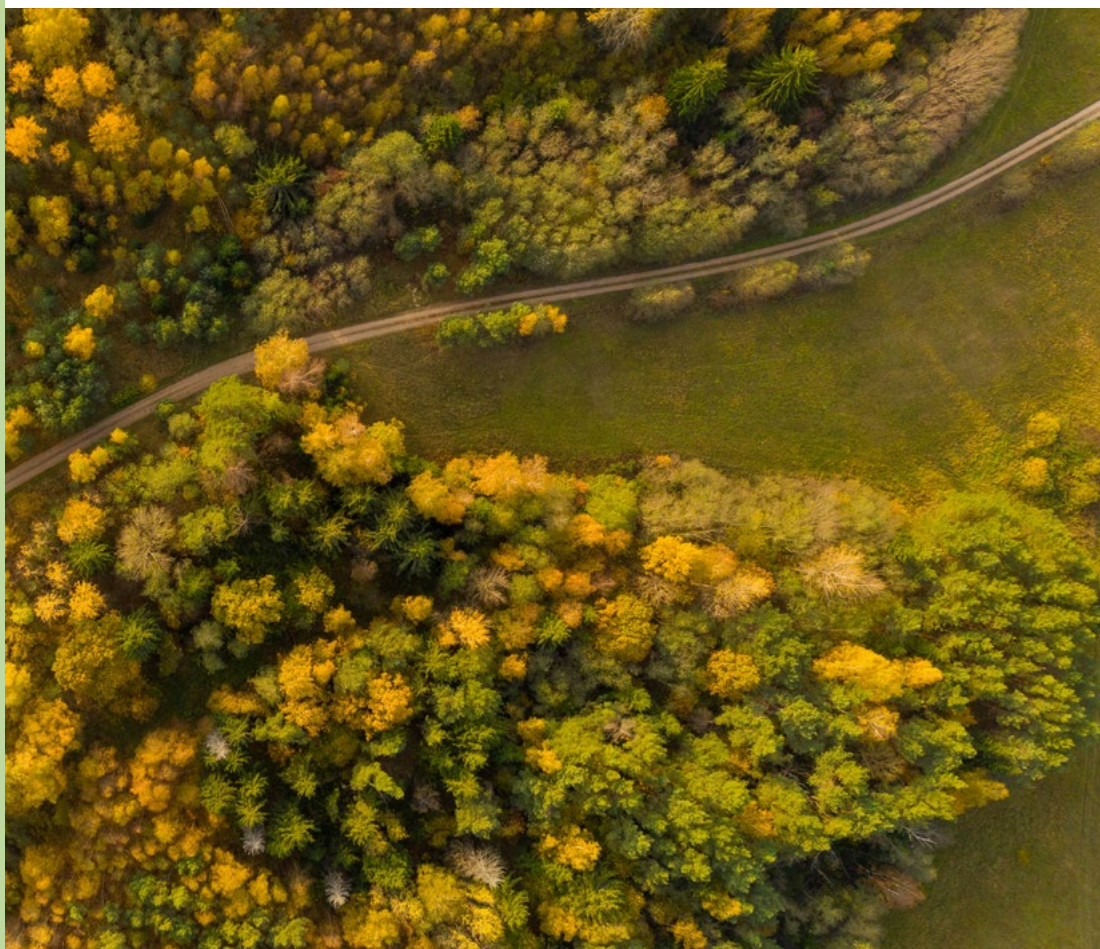


Authenticity

Leading from the Core

Preparing for the Offsite



An aerial photograph of a dense forest with a mix of green and yellow trees, suggesting autumn. A road winds through the forest, and a river is visible in the upper left corner. The text is overlaid on the left side of the image.

“Commitment is what
transforms a promise
into reality”

Abraham Lincoln

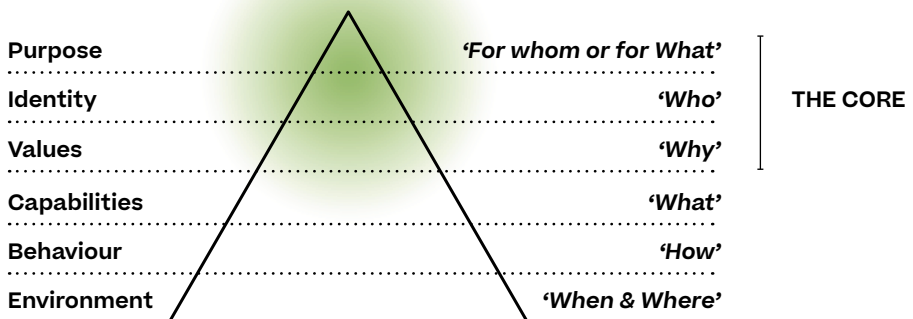
Authenticity

Leading from the Core

Please read this article which contains introductory thoughts about the idea of authenticity and authentic leadership. Please also complete the reflection questions towards the end of the article.

As a leader, is it helpful to have clarity about your values, identity and purpose? The discovery of purpose is a lifelong adventure – it will not allow itself to be fully contained to a 9-month programme or a series of exercises. However, there is something to be said for engaging in the dialogue, rolling your sleeves up and allowing your purpose to find its voice. We believe this will happen when you get more clarity about your values, identity and what you are committed to.

An authentic leader is someone who leads from ‘the core’ (see the Logical Levels of Change diagram below). By this we mean being consistently committed to aligning your behaviours, skills, decisions and actions with the top levels of the models - the purpose, identity and values.



Our experience suggests that if you want to lead effectively, it can be helpful to know what you're committed to. Are you clear about, and committed to your purpose, identity and values? If not, what are you committed to?

A quote that has resonated with us when we consider commitment comes from William H Murray, the late Scottish Himalayan Explorer:

“Until one is committed, there is hesitancy, the chance to draw back, always ineffectiveness. Concerning all acts of initiative (and creation), there is one elementary truth, the ignorance of which kills countless ideas and splendid plans: that the moment one definitely commits oneself, then providence moves too.”

Commitment. It's a resource that we can mine. Without it, leadership is about going through the motions. Many people find themselves relating to others and situations through obligation, fear or confusion (instead of from 'the core'). They are not 'in it', rather, they have constructed a relationship that they feel others expect of them and therefore are not free to be themselves. They are not committed and the relationship is not sustainable. It's like 'Karaoke Leadership' – a poor imitation of the original.

Another way of thinking about commitment is - who am I as a unique contribution to that particular person or situation? What is my best expression that will bring the 'real me' to the issue or people? Leadership is about making choices to 'show up' and not hide behind a title or position. It is having the courage to be true to your convictions and honour your purpose, identity and values.

However, there is more when it comes to operating from a place of commitment. Murray makes the connection between commitment and providence. His hypothesis states that with commitment we will also enter into the mysterious world of providence. This may be a leap for some, however, it is a useful concept to explore.

When leaders operate with a sense of commitment something seems to happen. By commitment we mean when they have a compelling sense of purpose that is aligned with their values (what's deeply important to them) and identity (who they are).

When leading from this place, they can be extremely engaging. Others notice them. They become more attractive and their language and behaviours carry a natural authority. In a sense, they tap into an accessible, yet elusive form of power. And others will follow them. They are committed.

Recently one of our coaches worked with a leader in a bank. He was talking about his boss and stated, *“He has passion and integrity. I know exactly where I stand. He doesn’t get it right all the time but I’d follow him anywhere.”*

His boss was displaying the type of commitment that Murray is referencing. Limited hesitancy, little fear, confidence, security. And, by being committed, others were noticing and responding positively. The team member recognised his commitment and was prepared to follow.

When you become truly committed other things happen. Positive things that might be outside of your control. Things that will pleasantly surprise you and build your confidence. This is providence. To access this, you need to display commitment.

As leaders we need to understand ourselves better in order to understand what our commitment looks like. And this is where the work of discovering your purpose, identity and values is important. If you have clarity here, it is more likely that you will know what you want to commit to. Without this clarity, you’re in danger of committing to things that don’t align for you, or serve you well.

At times we compromise ourselves. We know intuitively when we are in conflict with our ‘core’ and something stirs within us to bring about change. We can see unproductive patterns of behaviour emerging and as we grow and develop we learn to take bolder steps to challenge these.

An authentic leader is more likely to be committed through the hardest of circumstances and still contributes with all that they are. Today we see many examples of uncommitted leadership. Values remain unchecked and ignored, individual’s identities are forgotten about or pushed to the side, a leader’s purpose is lost in the demands and pressures of organisational targets, previously visible people choose to hide and withdraw when conflict happens.

Therefore, we believe the following questions to be of significant importance. Please take some time to note down immediate thoughts in response to these.

Where might I be showing signs of uncommitted behaviour?

Type your answer below

What does this look like?

Type your answer below

What might be contributing to this?

Type your answer below

Where might I be showing signs of commitment?

Type your answer below

What does this look like?

Type your answer below

What might be contributing to this?

Type your answer below

What do I need to do to become more of the authentic me?

Type your answer below