

AUTHENTIC LEADERSHIP: TEN STRATEGIES THAT ENSURE A CULTURE OF GREATNESS

By David Irvine, Best-Selling Author and Leader's Navigator

1. **Decide to be a leader.** Leadership is a decision. If you have decided to build a renewed culture and make the workplace better because of your presence, you are, by decision, a leader. Power, purpose, and privilege no longer reside at the top of an organization. They potentially live at every level.
2. **Recognize the difference between a “boss” and a “leader.”** A boss is a *position*. Leadership is a *presence*. Leadership is the capacity to build cultures that attract, retain, and unleash greatness that comes from the strength of that presence. While bosses get the work done, leaders are committed to building strong partnerships, people, and organizations, regardless of their position. Leadership is something you earn by the choices you make and the actions you take.
3. **Inspire others with a vision, passion, and courage.** Martin Luther King didn't say, “I have a strategic plan.” He inspired people with a dream. *Be* the change you want to see around you. As tough as it is in our current reality of economic uncertainty, authentic leaders are able to take the higher ground of staying out of the drama and focus on a determined effort toward a vision. Keep working as hard on yourself as you do on your job. Bring passion and excitement to your work. Being around inspired, visionary people is contagious.
4. **Bring your authentic self to work.** Everyday you come to work and bring your body with you. But do you bring your whole self? Your passions? Your highest aspirations? Your dreams? Your unique gifts? Your creativity? Authenticity means arriving at work energized and inspired, ready to operate at your full potential. You have a personal commitment, both to the organization and to yourself. You are engaged in what you are doing. You experience deep satisfaction in your work and your life. Why? Because you know you are doing what you are meant to be doing. Authentic leadership is about bringing more of who you are to what you do, and then inspiring others to find their authentic voice through the power of your spirit. It's that simple, and it's that difficult.
5. **Decide that all blame is a waste of time, and focus on what you can impact.** Whenever you find yourself blaming, complaining, worrying, or stressed, take a piece of paper and draw a line down the middle. On the left side make a list of everything that is concerning, stressing, and worrying you. On the right side, list everything you have a degree of control over, those things you can actually influence. Now, stop complaining, let go of the things in the left column, and get busy focusing on the list of things you can impact.
6. **Chose service over self-interest.** Leadership is a calling. It's not a job. Being committed to continually bringing value to others in your work helps individuals answer that calling. Choosing service over self-interest means replacing entitlement with ownership — ownership for the well-being of the larger organization, even when you aren't in control. We institutionally deny the fact that each of us — through our perceptions and our choices — is actually creating the culture and the leadership we so enjoy complaining about. Deciding that you have created the world around you — and therefore you are the one to step into healing it — is the ultimate act of accountability.
7. **Be known as a person who is accountable.** Accountability is the ability to be counted on. While it is

always easier to see a lack of accountability in others, decide that accountability begins with you. Before judging others, look at your own habits as a leader. Fill any blatant accountability gaps you are responsible for personally. Go to meetings on time, follow through on commitments, and deliver on your promises. Be loyal in people's absence. Be known as a person who builds rather than tears down, who seeks solutions rather than problems, and who inspires rather than gossips. Accept accountability — even when you are surrounded by people you can't count on. Accountability lies at the foundation of both labour and life.

8. **Prioritize your key relationships — your “top 20.”** If you want to make a difference in the world, you are eventually going to have to make a choice about the most important people on which to invest your time and energy. You can't take good care of more than about a couple dozen people. Decide on your top 20 relationships in your network of responsibilities, and spend the majority of your time ensuring that these people are well-served. You can't be everything to everyone.
9. **Take time for tea.** Manage by wandering around. Get out of your office and away from your computer. Pay attention. Be in touch. Get to know people. Be connected. Organizational cultures have become the new neighborhood, and leadership involves caring about people, not manipulating them:
 - Take time to get to know what is happening in people's lives: their needs, values, passions, and dreams.
 - Learn people's names.
 - Ask questions. Get input from people whenever you can, and

genuinely consider their suggestions.

- Regularly ask people what they think.
 - Write a weekly thank-you note.
 - Apologize.
 - Have the courage and confidence to say, “I don't know.”
 - Catch people doing things right.
 - Ask for feedback.
 - Give others the credit.
 - Take time to sit for a cup of tea.
10. **Know your worth away from your work.** You aren't what you do. If you are what you do, then when you don't, you aren't! Leaders always seem to be more effective when they have a life away from their work. They have inspiration to bring to work. When you have a life that fulfills you away from your job, work becomes a tool to express yourself, rather than a place that defines you. This, in turn, brings more balance in your life, puts less pressure on you and those you serve, and makes for a more inspired culture in your organization.

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David Irvine is sought after internationally as a speaker, author, and mentor. His work has contributed to the building of accountable, vital, and engaged organizations across North America. He is the co-founder of the Newport Institute for Authentic Living whose focus is to build authentic organizational cultures that attract and retain great people. David is the best selling author of five books. His most recent book is *Bridges Of Trust: Making Accountability Authentic*. These are available in bookstores or can be ordered at www.davidirvine.com

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