

# Authentic Leadership

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## History & Development

1970-1990's

- Initially studied within the research on Transformational Leadership but not fully conceptualized within the research model

2000- 2010

- The Enron scandal, 9/11 attacks and economic collapse caused by the failure of the major financial institutions, brought about a need for leadership that society perceived as being trustworthy and transparent. This point has been noted as the emergence of Authentic Leadership as a separate field of study.

## Practical Approaches

### Robert Terry's Authentic Leadership Approach

- Action Centered
- Focuses on the actions of the leader, leadership team or organization in a particular situation.
- Moral Premise: Leaders should strive to do what is right.
- Leaders must be able to distinguish between authentic and inauthentic actions. (Be true to thy self)
- Authentic Wheel of Action (six components) Mission, Power, Structure, Resources, Existence and Meaning
- Locate the problem by doing assessments of employees and their organizational concerns.
- Select an appropriate response to the issue.
- Urges leaders to be authentic or "true" to themselves, their organization, and their world, and to base their actions on what is going on in the situation.

### Bill George's Authentic Leadership Approach

- Focuses on the characteristics of authentic leaders, essential qualities of authentic leadership and how individuals can develop these qualities of they want to become authentic leaders.
- 5 Basic Characteristics
  - Purpose - Passion
    - They know what they are about and where they are going. They are inspired and motivated about their goals.
  - Values - Behavior
    - They have a clear idea of who they are, where they are going and what the right thing is to do. They do not compromise their values.
  - Relationships - Connectedness
    - The capacity to open themselves up and establish a connection with others
  - Self-Discipline - Consistency
    - Helps leaders reach their goals, stay focused and determined and to carry out their work in accordance with their values.
  - Heart - Compassion
    - Being sensitive to the plight of others, opening one's self to others and being willing to help them.
    - As leaders develop compassion, they learn to be authentic
    - Achieved by doing community service projects, being involved with other racial or ethnic groups or traveling to developing countries.

## Strengths

- Fulfills an expressed need for trustworthy leadership in society
- Helps to fill a void and provides an answer to people who are searching for good and sound leadership in an uncertain world
- Provides broad guidelines for individuals who want to become authentic leaders.
- Has an explicit moral dimension, requires leaders to do what is "right" and "good" for their followers and society
- Authentic Leadership emphasized that authentic values and behaviors can be developed in leaders overtime.
- Authentic Leadership can be measured using the Authentic Leadership Questionnaire (ALQ) The ALQ is a validated, theory-based instrument comprising 16 items that measure four factors of authentic leadership

## Weaknesses

- AL is still in the formative stages of development and there are a number of questions that still need to be addressed about the theory. The concepts and ideas presented in the practical approaches are not fully substantiated.
- The moral component of authentic leadership is not fully explained.
- Researchers have questioned whether positive psychological capacities should be included as components of authentic leadership

## Practical Applications

- People can acquire the skills of an Authentic Leader
- The Authentic leadership process can be developed over time
- Authentic Leaders be true to oneself, honest, open and work for the common good
- Shaped and changed by a life event- that facilitated growth and authenticity