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By **Rick Boxx**

## **BENEFITS OF BEING AUTHENTIC**

How do you feel when you suspect someone is not being authentic or genuine, when it appears that individual is putting on an act – a “façade” – to make a desired impression with the people he or she is with at the time?

Such behavior can sometimes be described as “hypocrisy.” The root of this word comes from the Greek, a term used to identify an actor, someone who wears a mask, as they did in ancient times. When we watch a movie or attend a live theatrical performance, we accept someone doing this because that is the actor’s job. They may portray characters very unlike who they really are, but we understand that is what “acting” is all about.

However, witnessing such behavior in everyday life is not as defensible. We want people to be authentic – to say what they truly mean and be who they really are, not to present themselves falsely for a desired effect. We commonly observe this contradiction in the political scene: elected officials and candidates making speeches in which they say what they believe the audience wants to hear. Later, if public opinion polls indicate a shift, they start saying things very different.

Of course, this also occurs in the business and professional world. A former CEO of United Van Lines, Rich McClure, candidly shared at one of our events that one day he

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was talking with some people near his assistant's desk. After their departure, his assistant said to him, "People can tell when you're authentic and when you're not."

This was very convicting for Rich, because the assistant was right. He had just put on a show for these people, trying to impress them and elicit a certain response. This was obvious to his assistant – and likely to his guests as well. Rich humbly accepted this well-intended rebuke and determined to learn from it and act differently in the future.

Being authentic in all of our interactions, whether in the workplace, our homes, or our communities, is not always easy. We want people to think well of us, and it can be tempting to misrepresent ourselves, our companies or our products if it seems this will help in achieving the desired result. However, people can sense a lack of sincerity, when we are not being genuine. "Putting on a mask" in real life can have very detrimental consequences.

This is why the Bible often speaks of the importance of being authentic, giving people the assurance that "what you see is what you get." Psalm 15:1-2 teaches, "Lord, who may dwell in your sacred tent? Who may live on your holy mountain? The one whose walk is blameless, who does what is righteous, who speaks the truth from their heart."

Another passage speaks of a benefit of being authentic, warning against trying to mislead or deceive. "The man of integrity walks securely, but he who take crooked paths will be found out" (Proverbs 10:9).

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In the workplace, regardless of the external circumstances, we should all strive to be known for our authenticity. As Proverbs 24:26 states, “An honest answer is like a kiss on the lips.”

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### Reflection/Discussion Questions

1. How important is it for you to know that those you work with are being authentic, and not attempting to misrepresent themselves or their business with their words or actions?
2. Do you regard words or actions that are not genuine or authentic to be hypocritical? Why or why not?

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3. What do you think your response would be if someone, as Rich McClure's assistant did for him, confronted you at a time they felt you were not being authentic? Do you feel you would be receptive to such constructive criticism?
  
4. What steps can we take – should we take – to ensure we are not “putting on a mask” in work settings, seeking to misrepresent ourselves to others?

NOTE: If you have a Bible and would like to read more about this subject, consider the following passages:

1 Samuel 16:7; Proverbs 11:3, 20:14, 21:6, 29:5; Matthew 5:33-37, 23:27-28

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