Simmons University
Institute *for*
Inclusive Leadership

**2021 LEADERSHIP
DEVELOPMENT SURVEY**

The Importance of Authenticity *in the Workplace*

**Based on a survey of attendees conducted at the
2021 Simmons Leadership Conference**

Executive Summary

What are the key influencing factors that allow team members to show up as their authentic selves at work? What can organizations do to foster cultures of authenticity? We surveyed 6,725 people who registered for the 2021 Simmons Leadership Conference to learn more about the importance of authenticity in the workplace, what it really means, and its impact is on individuals and organizations.

Authenticity matters: Over 90% of our survey respondents agreed that authenticity in the workplace is important.

Most people are authentic: A significant majority of our respondents (71%) said they were able to be authentic at work.

It's not just about the individual: Our study found that being authentic in the workplace is beneficial for both individuals and organizations.

Authenticity defined: Our survey respondents helped us to clarify the top five qualities and behaviors for being authentic at work.

Practicing authenticity can be complex: Our findings show that it's important to be aware of several key work culture tensions and learn how to navigate them.

Tools for cultivating authenticity: Data and insights from this study offered practical tools and actionable next steps to support both individuals and organizations on their authenticity journey.

> "It feels like authenticity has snowballed for me... The more authentic I was, the more people appreciated my authenticity. For those who don't, because I am genuine and it comes from a good place with honesty, it feels like people tolerate unpopular perspectives from me."

How authentic can you be at work?

71% of survey respondents are able to be authentic at work. We surveyed the 6,725 registrants for the Simmons Leadership Conference virtually held on March 23 and throughout April 2021 with a 22% response rate.

- 23% NEUTRAL
- 6% NOT VERY AUTHENTIC
- 12% EXTREMELY AUTHENTIC
- 59% VERY AUTHENTIC
- 0% NOT AUTHENTIC AT ALL

INSIDE
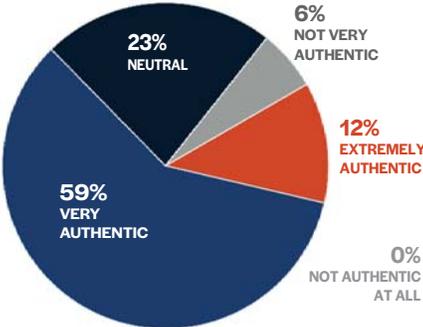
The benefits of being authentic at work

![Key finding icon] **Key finding:** When employees are able to be authentic at work, it benefits both the individual and the organization.

A number of respected authors and speakers have emphasized the positive impact that authenticity can have on an organization's individual team members—particularly on millennials—and on the work environment as a whole.[1] Our survey results strongly support both of these findings.

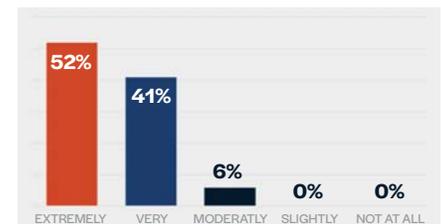### Authenticity at work is important
93% of our survey respondents agree that being authentic at work is important. In fact, over half (52%) feel that authenticity is extremely important—the survey question's most emphatic choice. Virtually no one feels that authenticity is an unimportant factor in the workplace.

Authentic staff feel better about themselves
According to our respondents, those who are able to be authentic at work feel more confident (71%) as well as more engaged (60%) and happier (46%). The ranking of these benefits by respondents is consistent with previous studies that link authenticity to greater job satisfaction, in-role performance and work engagement.[2] "More confident" is our survey's top choice by a margin of 11%. Over 30% of participants link their ability to be authentic with a greater sense of fulfillment: feeling more inspired, better about themselves, better about where they work. Again, this is generally consistent with the results of previous studies.

"It is easier to be genuine than to keep a front on. I feel like I am more productive when I don't have to put on airs in order to be accepted. I have heard it said before, 'It can be exhausting to keep all the lies straight.' That's what happens when you can't be authentic at work."

How important is it to you to be authentic at work?

| EXTREMELY | VERY | MODERATELY | SLIGHTLY | NOT AT ALL |
| 52% | 41% | 6% | 0% | 0% |

How do you feel when you are authentic at work?

71% MORE CONFIDENT
60% MORE ENGAGED
36% MORE INSPIRED
31% BETTER ABOUT COMPANY
46% HAPPIER
35% BETTER ABOUT SELF
21% SUPPORTED BY COLLEAGUES

1) See Gavin, M. (2019, December 10). "Authentic leadership: what it is & why it's important." *Harvard Business School Online*. Retrieved from https://online.hbs.edu/blog/post/authentic-leadership; Peart, N. (2019, December 11). "Authenticity at work: why it matters for millennials and how it can improve your bottom line." *Forbes*. Retrieved from https://www.forbes.com/sites/nathanpeart/2019/12/11/authenticity-at-work-why-it-matters-for-millennials-and-how-it-can-improve-your-bottom-line/?sh=5e466f9b2f75; Buote, V. (2016, May 11). "Most employees feel authentic at work, but it can take a while." Retrieved from https://hbr.org/2016/05/most-employees-feel-authentic-at-work-but-it-can-take-a-while; and George, B. and Sims, P. (2007). *True North: Discover Your Authentic Leadership*. New Jersey: Jossey-Bass.

2) See Buote above as well as van den Bosch, R. and Taris, T. (2014). "Authenticity at work: development and validation of an individual authenticity measure at work." *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 15, 1–18. In addition to great job satisfaction and engagment, Buote also found that authentic employees have greater happiness at work, a stronger sense of community, more inspiration, and lower job stress.

Authenticity has a positive impact on work

The survey respondents who said they were able to be authentic at work (93%) were asked what the impact was. They were given a series of options from which they could choose the top three. Following are the "top five" most popular choices. Enhanced effectiveness and productivity are clearly positive impacts. Another noteworthy impact appears to be organizational loyalty, especially when we consider the 6th-most popular response (closely ranked to #5): "I am more committed to staying with my organization."

1) I am more able to do my best work
2) I build stronger relationships with my colleagues
3) I am more effective
4) I am more productive
5) I am more likely to go "above and beyond" for my organization
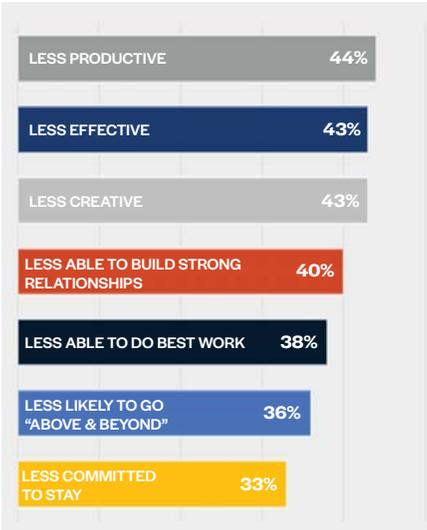
What is the impact when you are authentic at work?

BUILD STRONGER RELATIONSHIPS	53%
MORE ABLE TO DO BEST WORK	52%
MORE EFFECTIVE	48%
MORE PRODUCTIVE	44%
LIKELY TO GO "ABOVE & BEYOND"	42%
MORE COMMITTED TO STAY	30%

We asked the 7% of respondents who said they were *not* able to be authentic at work what the impact was. The same themes emerged—a decrease in productivity, effectiveness and organizational loyalty—as well as a diminishment of creativity and relationship-building. Following are the "top 5" responses, ranked in order:

1) I am less productive
2) I am less effective
3) I am less creative
4) I am less able to build strong relationships with my colleagues
5) I am less able to do my best

These findings reinforce the idea that an individual's authenticity at work leads to positive outcomes which, in turn, benefit their organizations.

What is the impact when you are NOT authentic at work?

LESS PRODUCTIVE	44%
LESS EFFECTIVE	43%
LESS CREATIVE	43%
LESS ABLE TO BUILD STRONG RELATIONSHIPS	40%
LESS ABLE TO DO BEST WORK	38%
LESS LIKELY TO GO "ABOVE & BEYOND"	36%
LESS COMMITTED TO STAY	33%

Authenticity isn't only about the individual

Key findings: Managers who model authenticity encourage team members to be authentic. Organizational support also plays a key role in a team member's ability to be authentic.

Not surprisingly, individuals who feel comfortable being authentic at work are often employed at organizations with a culture of authenticity and managed by leaders who are themselves authentic.

Authentic managers contribute to individual authenticity
First some good news: 81% of our survey respondents say their managers are authentic.

Our study clearly shows that a manager's authenticity contributes significantly to the ability of individual team members to show up as their authentic selves on the job. When asked to rank a series of possible impacts of working for someone who is authentic, 71% of our respondents ranked "I am encouraged to be authentic as well" among their top three options out of eight.

We also looked more closely at those respondents (81%) who said their manager is authentic. We found a statistically significant relationship *(p = <.01)* between the manager's ability to be authentic and the respondent's ability to be authentic.

These findings corroborate the work of other authors about the positive impacts of authentic managers on job satisfaction, work happiness, and organizational and team commitment.[3]

"The company I work for doesn't reward those who are less than authentic. It values the sharing of ideas without risk so there is less of a need to not be authentic."

"After working hard to try to improve a work environment in which I could not be authentic, I left after feeling unhappy, unproductive and not good about myself. I committed to never being in a situation like that again and to creating authentic work environments wherever I am."

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3) See for example van den Bosch, R and Taris, T. (2014). "Authenticity at work: development and validation of an individual authenticity measure at work." *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 15(1), 1–18; Darvish, H. and Rezaei, F. (2011) *The impact of authentic leadership on job satisfaction and team commitment. Management & Marketing*, 6(3), 421-436; and Jensen, S. and Luthans, F. (2006) "Entrepreneurs as authentic leaders: impact on employees' attitudes." *Leadership & Organization Development Journal,* 27(8), 646-666.

Supportive organizations contribute to individual authenticity
In addition to the modeling of authenticity by managers, support of the organization itself plays a significant role in the ability of individual team members to be authentic. Not surprisingly, our study finds a statistically significant relationship between organizations that encourage a respondent to be authentic at work (63%) and the respondent's ability to be authentic. Indeed, the role of organizational culture and environment in cultivating authenticity among team members is a recurring theme in our survey respondent's qualitative comments (right).

See the "Tools" section on p. 12 for more information on what organizations can do to foster authenticity.

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

Positive factors that respondents say contribute to the ability to be authentic at work

"A culture that fosters psychological safety and incentivizes collaborative continuous improvement rather than performance theater."

"Improving company culture. Protect people and ensure there are no repercussions for being authentic and truthful. Put more effort into building up employees."

"The safety of knowing that the culture of my organization is accepting of differences."

What does authenticity mean?

Key finding: People define authenticity in the workplace in terms of qualities such as honesty, openness and transparency, and behaviors such as owning mistakes.

"[Being authentic] means finding ways to bring your best version of yourself and also accepting others as they are. It means being able to feel uncomfortable and enabling others to do the same."

A major finding of our study is a clearer definition of what authenticity actually means in the the workplace. Though survey responses vary widely, several key personal qualities and behavioral traits are consistently associated with both authentic individuals and authentic managers.

"Top 5" authentic qualities in individuals

We asked respondents to think of someone who is authentic, and then share the three most important qualities that make that person authentic. Respondents provided their own spontaneous list of words or phrases in response to our open-ended questions. (See right for the five most common responses.)

Honesty, Openness and Transparency

Honesty is by far the most commonly cited personal quality indicating an individual's authenticity. In fact, honesty appears over twice as many times as the second- and third-most cited qualities of openness and transparency. Arguably, openness and transparency are very closely related concepts that could be combined. However, since our researchers didn't ask respondents what specific meaning they attach to these words, or what distinguishes one from the other, we have chosen to keep them separate. Still, we believe it's fair to say that being truthful and actively sharing information (openness + transparency) are central to the notion of authenticity for the majority of our respondents.

Confidence

Confidence was the next most-cited quality of authenticity, with over 10% of all respondents listing it as one of their top three characteristics of people they see as authentic. One interpretation is that people who experience minimal tension be-

Top 5 Authentic Qualities in **INDIVIDUALS**[4]

1. HONEST
2. OPEN
3. TRANSPARENT
4. CONFIDENT
5. VULNERABLE

4) Rankings are based on combining different forms of the same word, for example "honest" and "honesty"

tween who they are, how they feel, and how they show up are seen by other as being both authentic and confident. But the popular strategy in leadership training of "fake it until you make it" points to an alternative reading: that it's important to *seem* confident—especially among women and other underrepresented communities—when you're trying to project authenticity.

Vulnerability

It's worth noting that vulnerability is the fifth-most spontaneously cited quality. Could it be that showing up as your authentic self, for many of our respondents, requires a certain amount of exposure and risk? More on this later.

"Top 5" authentic qualities in managers

Respondents who saw their immediate manager as authentic were asked to name the top three qualities they associate with that person's authenticity. Again, this was posed as an open-ended question without a list of prompts. (See right for the five most common responses.)
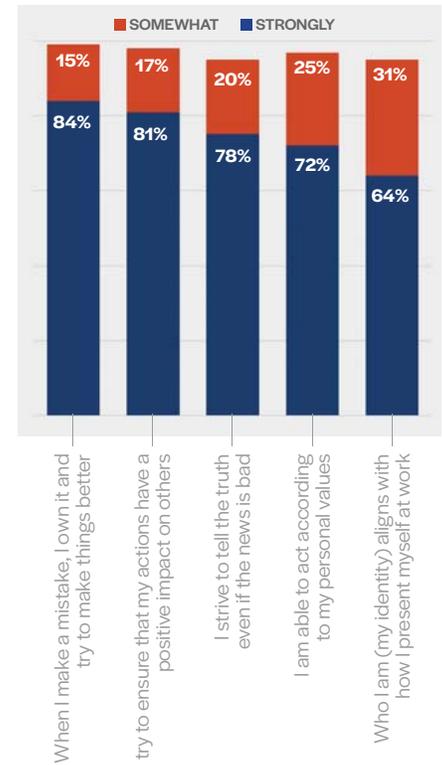
Honesty, Openness and Transparency

These were again the top three qualities valued in managers—with honesty also ahead by a significant margin. In this case, vulnerability and confidence switched places.

Importance of being both personal and professional

For all of the "top five" about managers, the absolute numbers were lower than for our previous question (640 total citations for manager vs. 964 for individuals). This was due to the citation of additional qualities specific to managerial authenticity. The next most common characteristics focus around sharing personal information and experiences, and connecting on a more personal level with direct reports. These attributes were followed by "Feedback," "Team," and " Supportive," suggesting that managers who are seen as authentic are those who follow good leadership practices both at the individual and team levels.

"Top 5" behaviors of authenticity

We also asked survey respondents about the "behaviors" of being authentic. For this question, we offered a set of 11 behaviors gleaned from current literature and popular understanding of authenticity in the context of work. Although all 11 behaviors held merit with respondents, these were the most commonly selected:

- When I make a mistake, I own it and try to make things better
- I try to ensure that my actions have a positive impact on others
- I strive to tell the truth even if the news is bad

Top 5 Authentic Qualities in **MANAGERS**[4]

1. HONEST
2. OPEN
3. TRANSPARENT
4. VULNERABLE
5. CONFIDENT

To what extent do you agree that each of the following are part of being authentic at work?

	SOMEWHAT	STRONGLY

	Somewhat	Strongly
When I make a mistake, I own it and try to make things better	15%	84%
I try to ensure that my actions have a positive impact on others	17%	81%
I strive to tell the truth even if the news is bad	20%	78%
I am able to act according to my personal values	25%	72%
Who I am (my identity) aligns with how I present myself at work	31%	64%

- I am able to act according to my personal values
- Who I am (my identity) aligns with how I present myself at work[5]

Resonating the strongest are the abilities to own mistakes, make a positive impact, and tell it like it is. These three behaviors are of equal importance to our respondents (they have the same mean of 3.8).

Importance of positive impact
In addition to rating this behavior at the top of the list, many of our respondents include concern about others in their personal definitions of authenticity (see word cloud at right), particularly the qualities of "Empathy," "Care," and "Compassion." These findings are consistent with Simmons University's position that an authentic person can't be authentically bad or use authenticity as an excuse for bad behavior. As one respondent put it: "Authenticity does not mean we should be unprofessional." This supports Walumbwa, et. al. (2008) who assert that an authentic leader is of high moral development and not ethically-neutral.[6]

Aligning identity, presentation, and values
The next most common behaviors focus on being true to oneself and acting in accordance with personal values.[7] These align with what we thought would be the most common view of authenticity. To quote Jerry Herman: "I am what I am."

These five behaviors also correlate with the most cited qualities of honesty, transparency, openness and vulnerability. So this combination of traits and behaviors creates a strong and consistent picture of authenticity in the workplace. It requires being open and transparent, admitting when you make a mistake, and doing your best to have a positive impact on others. Although the description is clear, in practice there are many challenges to be navigated as we will explore in the next section.

> "We tend to look at 'authentic' as a positive. However, there could be people with different management styles who are true to themselves but very demotivating."

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5) Following is the full list of 11 behaviors: How I behave at work is also how I behave in my personal life; I am able to act according to my personal values; Who I am (my identity) aligns with how I present myself at work; I try to ensure that my actions have a positive impact on others; I am able to control my emotions at work; When the situation is right, I allow myself to be vulnerable; When the situation is right, I talk about my weaknesses; I share information about my personal life with colleagues; When I make a mistake, I own it and try to make things better; I strive to tell the truth even if the news is bad; I share my opinions, even if I think others will disagree.

6) Walumba et al (2008) made this assertion in the context of authentic leadership. As they put it, a theory of leadership that is "focused on authentic leadership development, will be incomplete and misguided if it does not contribute to increased awareness and attention to the inherent ethical responsibilities that reside in the leadership role." Walumbwa, F., Avolio, B., Gardner, W., Wernsing, T. and Peterson, S. (2008). "Authentic leadership: development and validation of a theory-based measure," *Journal of Management*, 34(1), 89-126, 94. Although this assertion is about authentic leadership, the same can be asserted for every authentic person especially if considering the qualities and behaviors that came up for our respondents—qualities that demonstrate ethical responsibility.

7) This is consistent with how some authors define being authentic. See George and Sims (2007) (see previous citation); Bishop, W. (2013). "Defining the authenticity in authentic leadership." *The Journal of Values-Based Leadership*, 6(1), article 7. Retrieved from http://scholar.valpo.edu/jvbl/vol6/iss1/7

Navigating the complexities of authenticity at work

Key finding: Showing up at work as your authentic self is a good thing, but it may not be quite as easy as it sounds.

"When I have been authentic, been my true self, I have had negative consequences. I am naturally shy, quiet, and introverted. My work rewards people who are exuberant, outspoken, extroverted. I have learned over the years how to adapt, but it is uncomfortable and exhausting. I wish more work places understood that there is a diverse workforce and that all personality types have a value in the workplace community."

We're happy to report that fostering authenticity in the workplace brings positive benefits to both individuals and managers. It also enhances an organization's culture. However, our findings also suggests that authenticity may require navigating unexpected tensions around privacy, growth and vulnerability.

Sharing personal information

Consider the issue of sharing personal life information with others. Our survey respondents rank it near the top of the list of qualities that make managers authentic. It is also viewed as a valuable behavior of authentic individuals, though it scores the lowest mean among the 11 behaviors we offered. What might account for this curious difference? Sharing personal information is often seen as an indicator of psychological safety.[8] However, we need to recognize that there are many people who do not feel comfortable sharing personal information at work for any number of valid reasons. For people with more reserved personalities, forcing them to disclose more personal information would be *in*authentic. In addition, there is a danger of oversharing, as we discuss below under vulnerability.

There is also a cultural dimension to sharing personal information.[9] Some business cultures, like that of United States, are less formal and encourage the sharing of personal information as part of the

8) See Snow, S. (2020 May 4). "How psychological safety actually works." *Forbes*. Retrieved from https://www.forbes.com/sites/shanes-now/2020/05/04/how-psychological-safety-actually-works/?sh=23b21ecbf864 and Torres, M. (2019 February 28). "How to deal with an oversharer at work (and stop yourself from becoming one)." *Huffpost*. Retrieved from https://www.huffpost.com/entry/oversharing-at-work-how-to-stop-an-oversharer_l_5c7412f6e4b06cf6bb29139b

9) See, for example, Meyer, E. (2014, May 30). "One reason cross-cultural small talk is so tricky." *Harvard Business Review*. Retrieved from https://hbr.org/2014/05/one-reason-cross-cultural-small-talk-is-so-tricky.

team-building process. Other business cultures, like that of Japan, are more formal and maintain strict divisions between work and home life. This phenomenon is known as "peach vs. coconut" cultures.[10]

Staying true to yourself while learning and growing

Another issue around the ability to be authentic at work is the tension between staying true to yourself and staying open to positive change. Organizational Behaviorist Herminia Ibarra cautions that "being authentic" should not be used as an excuse to stop developing, growing, and learning.[11] Our study supports this notion. A key theme that comes up for our respondents in their qualitative responses to the question of how organizations can support their ability to be authentic is the importance of education and training—not just around being authentic or developing an awareness of it in others, but also around DEI best practices and leadership development (see right for a few typical responses).

Vulnerability in the workplace

Yet another potential issue for those practicing authenticity at work is the inherent tension between the benefits of being vulnerable with co-workers and employees and the risks of showing too much vulnerability. As we mentioned above, our study finds that respondents see vulnerability as a key aspect of authenticity, both in general and when referring to their managers. The question is: where is the line between authenticity and over sharing, and when do we cross it into unprofessionalism? It's a delicate balance, and the line can shift from organization to industry to work culture. It's also a territory that needs to be navigated carefully lest we be seen as ineffective.

Managing your personal brand

Related to all of the above is the tension between being authentic and managing your brand. The notion of developing a personal brand is a pillar of many highly respected leadership development programs. Yet for many who are trying to show up as authentic at work, maintaining a professional persona feels inauthentic and

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10) Peaches are initially more friendly and open until collaborators reach the inner "pit" when they become more protective about sharing personal information; coconuts are initially more reserved about personal information and harder to "crack" but become more open once trust is established. See Trompenaars, F., Hampden-Turner, C. (2020). *Riding the waves of culture: understanding diversity in global business*. New York City: McGraw-Hill.

11) See Ibarra, H. (2015)."The Authenticity Paradox: Why feeling like a fake can be a sign of growth." *Havard Business Review.* Retrieved fom https://hbr.org/2015/01/the-authenticity-paradox

contrived. We suggest that these two concepts are not at odds. Managing your brand simply means highlighting your best self, your skills and your values. There is nothing inauthentic about that. Moreover, managing your brand requires the quality of vulnerability: an openness to learning more about yourself and others as well as developing your professional knowledge and skills.

Navigating any or all of these tension in the workplace requires the clear intention to read each situation carefully, understand the cultural context, and make judicious decisions. Remember, our survey respondents' second-most valued behavior of authenticity is to have a positive impact on others. When we take this to heart at the outset of our journey toward authenticity, we avoid the risk of impeding on the ability of others to be authentic—a fear voiced by some respondents in their commentary (see right). We also avoid creating the wrong impression of having a double-standard.

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

Our own authenticity vis-a-vis others

"It is important while encouraging authenticity that it is about balance and ensuring that someone's authenticity doesn't shut down others."

"I believe the ability to interpret other people is essential so you can adapt to them. This doesn't mean you are not authentic but authenticity also aligns and is supported with empathy."

"Allow other people to be authentic too, not one-sided."

DEMOGRAPHIC DIFFERENCES

We were initially inclined to think demographic differences, particularly in terms of gender, race and ethnicity, would impact the ability to be authentic at work. However, after closely examining the responses of those who provided information about their cultural identity, the positive benefits of being able to be authentic at work held across all demographics.

One hypothesis was, for example, that BIPOC women would feel less authentic at work than their white counterparts. But this was not supported by the data for this particular population.

Also of note: 96% of our respondents from this population identified as women. There was therefore not enough gender diversity among our respondents to make comparisons to men regarding their ability to be authentic.

This study did find, however, that among those respondents who found it harder to be authentic (17% somewhat harder and 3% much harder), the top reason was being a minority in their team or organization, whether in terms of race, ethnicity, gender and religious belief.

"Not having people like me in my work group, and people in my work group who are unlike me not having any real interest in what issues affect me, is heavy. It's very difficult to be authentic when you are the only one because you always have to be cautious."

	American Indian or Alaska Native	Asian or Asian American	Black, African, or African American	Caucasian / White	Hispanic, Latinx, or Spanish	Middle Eastern or North African
% of respondents	1%	12%	5%	69%	8%	1%
Extremely authentic	0%	19%	9%	12%	11%	25%
Very authentic	57%	54%	54%	61%	62%	38%
Neutral	14%	23%	26%	21%	19%	38%
Somewhat not authentic	29%	4%	11%	6%	8%	0%
Not authentic at all	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

Authenticity-building tools for individuals and organizations

Key finding: There are many practical ideas to explore when cultivating authenticity in the workplace–either as an individual team member or organization-wide.

We offer the following tools for building authenticity, derived from the data of this study, insights gained from our survey results, and suggestions offered by our respondents.

TOOLS FOR INDIVIDUALS

Individuals who wish to show up as their authentic selves in their jobs can face additional hurdles when their organizations don't fully value or understand the benefits of doing so. The following suggestions take this dynamic into consideration. Ultimately, though, it's always best to align yourself with an organization that values employee authenticity.

Get to know your authentic self: Authenticity requires self-knowledge and awareness. Spend time reflecting on your values, your goals and what makes you tick.

Practice authentic behaviors: Keep in mind the qualities and behaviors of being authentic. Remember, behaviors can be learned and practiced in everyday life.

Be brave: Being authentic takes courage and self-confidence, especially in an environment that doesn't encourage it. Find ways to develop your self-confidence, whether that's through journaling about your successes, developing your skills and competence, seeking feedback or seeking professional development opportunities.

Share your vulnerability: Develop the courage to share your vulnerability. It shows your humanity—that you also make mistakes and don't know everything.

> "It takes a tremendous amount of trust to be authentic. Trust that the people who see and hear you, especially when you make mistakes or you disagree, will not change their opinion about you."

AUTHENTICITY VS. OVERSHARING

While it's good to share your personal life and experiences with others, and contribute to a work environment that encourages honesty, openness and vulnerability, be mindful of when it is appropriate and when it may be considered oversharing. Also allow others the option of *not* sharing—without judgment—if that isn't for them.

Find a good coach or mentor: Needless to say, you should choose someone you believe to be authentic. A good coach or mentor can better guide you in honing qualities and behaviors that contribute to your being authentic.

Allow others to be authentic: Being authentic is a two-way street. It requires mutuality between you and your managers and colleagues. Allow those around you to be authentic as well.

Model authenticity as a manager: If you are a supervisor, team leader or manager, promote being authentic in your team by modeling authenticity yourself during your workday.

Build a network: Seek out people in your organization that can support your being authentic. Form an informal support group with them if there is none in your organization.

There's a lot of great literature out there on this topic. (We've quoted a few noteworthy authors and studies in this report.) Be on the constant lookout for educational tools that will help you further develop your awareness of being authentic.

TOOLS FOR ORGANIZATIONS

The most important factor in encouraging an individual's ability to be authentic is an organizational culture that encourages it. Here are some tools for getting started. Bear in mind that your entry-level team members will feel less able to be authentic than your managers, due in part to a lack of experience. That's why it's so important for your leadership team to model authenticity.

Make authenticity a core value: Set authenticity as one of the core values of the organization if it isn't yet. Be explicit about it by incorporating this in on-boarding informational materials and sessions, and have organization leaders reiterate it while walking the talk. Provide assurance that this value is being highlighted at all levels of the organization.

Offer professional development opportunities: Raise awareness in your organization about the value of authenticity by conducting professional development trainings, workshops and programs.

Highlight authentic leaders and employees: Promote role models within your organization who exemplify the concept of authenticity. If possible, reward them. Remember: being authentic has positive impact. Those who are more authentic are also likely to be the more successful employees in your organization.

Develop trust: Creating policies that guarantee every employee's ability to be authentic, regardless of job title or seniority level. Ensure that authenticity will not result in reprimands, lack of rewards or lack of professional growth.

Audit work norms for conformity: Check your organization's work-related norms and expectations. Do they encourage authenticity or promote conformity? Acknowledge and be open to various dimensions of difference. Cultivate a culture of inclusion.

Establish ERGs: Encourage the establishment of Employee Resource Groups (ERGs). These provide support for employees, allowing them to form trusting relationships.

When you adapt any or all of these tools to the needs of your organization, you cultivate a culture of openness and provide an environment of psychological safety. This study clearly shows that it's *good* for your organization to welcome open discussions, provide honest and respectful feedback, and engage in dialogues around difficult issues. You will see the benefits over time—an increase in team loyalty, happiness and productivity.

PROMOTING DIVERSITY

A diverse organizational community allows for diverse perspectives, work practices and leadership styles. A diverse workplace contributes to an environment that encourages authenticity. It also diminishes a feeling of isolation and alienation among your employees.

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Maria Elena Rivera-Beckstrom, also known as Annelle, conducts research to support the development of thought leadership for the Institute's practice areas. She also participates in the Simmons University community's efforts on racial justice and inclusive culture. Annelle has served as an instructor for the Simmons University Undergraduate (PLAN) program and engages in research and publication on comparative constitutional politics and legal culture.

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Vice President, Allyship & Inclusion, Simmons University Institute for Inclusive Leadership. Drawing on her expertise in gender equity and women's leadership, Elisa creates innovative programming that develops the mindset and skills of leaders at all stages of life so they can foster gender parity and cultures of inclusion. Elisa is a co-author on several publications, including *Professional Women and Confidence: A New Understanding of the "Gap"* (October 2017) and *Women's Experiences with "Male Allies"* (November 2018). She holds an MBA from Boston University, and is a certified professional coach and Gallup Strengths coach. She was the co-founder and chair of the Simmons Women's Initiative Forum, and has served on several women's advisory boards.

Simmons University Institute *for* Inclusive Leadership

ABOUT US

Our mission is to develop the mindset and skills of leaders at all stages of life so they can foster gender parity and cultures of inclusion. We offer research-driven programming for individuals and leadership journeys for entire organizations.

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