# The Emerald Handbook of Authentic Leadership

The Emerald Handbook of Authentic Leadership is a remarkable reader covering the complexities of leading across time, and into the future, with authenticity. The handbook offers a fresh leadership perspective across a vast field of research, from leadership insight revealed by classic literature, to the role of political and multinational institutions, to the growing influence of the internet of things, and well beyond. Great leadership literature compels the individual to think well beyond the chapters. As the handbook is about original research into the topic, the questions and unique insights about the leadership conditions lead the reader to consider their own role and aspirations in leadership. It is truly a mind-expanding exploration into all things authentic leadership.

**Justin Ferbey**, Deputy Minister of Economic Development, Yukon, Canada

Like many helpful big ideas, the notion of authentic leadership can prove to be remarkably slippery when subjected to close academic scrutiny. With contributions from a wide diversity of expert contributors, the Emerald Handbook of Authentic Leadership maps out and explores the boundaries of the landscape of authentic leadership, its literature, theory and practice, with commendable clarity and insight. I am encouraged to hope that its contribution will broaden our knowledge and understanding of the notion of authentic leadership, making it less slippery and more profoundly useful for many readers.

**Norman M. Fraser**, PhD, IT entrepreneur, Adjunct Professor, Aalborg University Business School, Denmark.

In a world where the old paradigms are breaking down, we need leaders to guide our politics, institutions and organisations through the turbulent waters of the 21st century and enable the world to break through to new sustainable models of growth. What is leadership? How do we define it and what does 'good' look like, in a world increasingly disrupted by existential threats such as pandemics and climate change? What do we mean by 'authentic and how does it "fit" with different cultures, social norms and the increasing intrusion of technology into decision-making? Finally, as new types of organisations and businesses emerge, what types of leadership are needed? *The*

*Emerald Handbook of Authentic Leadership* gives us perspectives from multiple dimensions as to how we might answer these vital questions. It will provoke thinking and, hopefully, lead to different ways of being and seeing leaders in our modern world.

**Steven Parker**, Leadership Coach,
Chair of TAA Tech Ventures, UK

Scholars, practitioners, and the general public will enjoy this insightful handbook on authentic leadership lessons from AI, education, business, policy, NGO contexts, as well as COVID-19, which specifically benefits from considerable data and hindsight since the pandemic onset. This interdisciplinary author team blends in historical approaches with the latest in the field to provide analysis and advice for leaders in corporations, non-profits, and the public sector. The variety of methodological approaches (e.g., bibliometrics, inductive qualitative research, and autoethnography) and contexts in the Emerald Handbook of Authentic Leadership showcase state-of-the-art scholarship and practice in authentic leadership.

**Siri Terjesen**, Professor, Florida Atlantic University, US

In today's fast-paced and ever-changing world, leadership plays an indispensable role in shaping society. With the emergence of alternative facts, truth decay, siloed thinking, and the unstoppable rise of AI, it has become increasingly difficult to come together and tackle regional and global issues while adhering to shared values. The Emerald Handbook of Authentic Leadership is a must-read for anyone who wants to understand and participate in the dialogue around the role of authentic leadership in today's fluid world. It is a wide-ranging, interdisciplinary guide that serves as a catalyst for meaningful conversations about what it means to be an authentic leader and the important part it plays in our ability to navigate the challenges of the 21st century. I believe it spurs on multi stakeholder debate and further collaboration on the complex topic of authentic leadership.

**Alex Tveit**, Co-founder and CEO, Sustainable Impact
Foundation, Toronto, Canada

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# The Emerald Handbook of Authentic Leadership

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

*To our families, leaders who continue to inspire us.*

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sustainable prosperity, Peace Child flashes back to the present to tell the story of what today's teenagers do in their working lives to bring about that desired future. For each performance, the young cast members re-invent the characters and re-write the dialogue, imagining themselves to be the protagonists of the story. Peace Child brought the first Soviet youth and rockstars to the United States as part of a cultural exchange in 1986, paving the way for over 100 US-USSR cultural youth exchanges – each one a powerful addition to the citizen diplomacy effort to end the Cold War. Following the end of the Cold War, Peace Child began to focus on the promotion of sustainable development, human rights, youth job creation and community well-being.

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# Foreword

What is it that distinguishes 'good' leadership from 'bad' leadership? Some leaders are renowned for their strength, others for their wisdom, some for their cunning, and still others for their empathy. A weak leader may be dismissed as ineffectual while a strong leader may be detested as brutal and bullying. A cautious leader may be written off as timid while a decisive leader may be condemned for lack of care for details. The very qualities that are judged weaknesses in some are held up as virtues in others. How can a leader chart an optimal course through these and all the other dilemmas that shape their leadership journey?

In recent times, the importance of *authenticity* in leadership has come to be recognised. Effective leadership has more to do with *being* than *doing.* It emanates from an individual's offering of the best version of who they really are, deployed for the common good, rather than an attempt to conform to some borrowed notion of what a leader ought to look like.

'Fake it 'til you make it' may sound like good advice, but once the fakery has been unmasked by those being led, the leader can all too readily be dismissed as an imposter. A better soundbite, surely, is 'be yourself, you can't be anybody else'. Play to your strengths, surround yourself with people who make up for your weaknesses, and don't treat leadership as a role-play exercise.

What I've learnt on my own thirty-year journey as a business founder, chairman and CEO is that leadership by consent beats leadership by force every time. Carrots are dramatically better than sticks. The best leader is one who people want to follow. Unless a leader has the trust of their people, they cannot lead optimally. Trust cannot be presumed; it has to be earned. And in order to be trusted, leaders must be believable. What the leader says and does must be credible, but *they* must also be credible in themselves. Leaders who command the consent of followers need to display more than skill, understanding and drive; they need to be seen to be true to themselves and to others. In short, leadership must be authentic.

All this may be easy to express in anecdotes and personal observations, as I have done, but like many helpful big ideas, the notion of authentic leadership can prove to be remarkably slippery when subjected to close academic scrutiny. With contributions from a wide diversity of expert contributors, this Handbook maps out and explores the boundaries of the landscape of authentic leadership, its literature, theory and practice, with commendable clarity and insight. I am encouraged to hope that its contribution will broaden our knowledge and

understanding of the notion of authentic leadership, making it less slippery and more profoundly useful for many readers.

Dr Norman M. Fraser
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# Preface

From classical times, writers, scholars, philosophers, not to mention the woman and man in the street, have speculated and continue to do so on the nature of leadership and what makes a good and/or successful leader. Should *good* and *successful* be coupled in evaluating leadership and what do either word mean in practice and in time? Does discussion of leadership need always to be contextualised, can it only be understood and evaluated contextually? Is gender a material factor in leadership? Are populism, social media, surveillance capitalism, digital transformation, algorithms, generative artificial intelligence, climate imperatives, fluidity, uncertainty, ambiguity all on a global scale, fundamentally changing the nature and understanding of leadership? Because leadership is so central to human experience, it is a disputed, debated, questioned, mistrusted topic, but that does not diminish; on the contrary, it augments the need to continue to search for insights from practitioners and scholars.

This handbook was prompted by a European ERASMUS+ project for PhD and PhD supervisor training in authentic leadership (IETN, www.ietn.aau.dk) which stemmed from our recognition that understanding of leadership is a competence that doctoral candidates and their supervisors need to acquire and nurture.

Authentic leadership is a relatively *young* phenomenon. It emanates from the business school world. It draws on other theories, concepts and methods, to develop conceptual or theoretical understanding of leadership and promotes its definitions of *authentic*. Generic assertions disguise the diversity of views on the nature of leadership and whether leadership is fundamentally about values and value systems or other drivers such as success.

IETN project demonstrated for us the need for more extensive exploration of authentic leadership, the development of leadership capacity, a broader enquiry and understanding of the nature of authenticity, a review of leadership theory and practice, all viewed from diverse, contrasting perspectives. There is an extensive literature and a strong sense of ownership of the concept of *authentic leadership* primarily in a sector of the American academic community and it is a contested field.

Authors in this handbook do not belong to the orthodox authentic leadership community. They offer varied, provocative views and personal case studies of leadership. Some endorse aspects of the concept of authentic leadership while developing new understanding of authenticity, others suggest that it is flawed and others offer fresh, challenging, leadership insights. Because leadership is a

dynamic arena, each study, in offering insights, recognises that continual research is essential to respond to the intensity of change and uncertainty. *Innovative*, *creative*, *agile*, *sensing*, *pragmatic* are among the terms leadership development that studies in this book suggest. They may be considered indicators of authenticity, but perhaps they reveal more about the agenda imperatives for the future practice of leadership in all spheres than the four pillars of the authentic leadership paradigm?

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