



Chapter 11

Show up as Anyone but Yourself

MY PERSONAL JOURNAL

Confidential

Tuesday, May 3

Today was horrible and I'm an absolute wreck. I'm exhausted and just about finished with this bottle of Chardonnay but I need to write anyway to get some stuff off my chest. I mean I guess it wasn't entirely horrible, I sure put on a good show—people still don't have a clue about this disaster of a divorce I'm going through ... thank God Jim's not being an ass about showing up to company events with me—we still look like the perfect happy couple! And everybody still thinks we're the philanthropists that we're not. He's not getting one dime and neither are his bogus charities that he "loves." ... The Xanax helps. I was able to sit through those boring strategy meetings all day AND go to that stupid charity function of his. I hate that charity and I hate those snot-nosed poor kids. Where do they come from anyway and why are there so many of them? Poor people just shouldn't have kids. Sometimes I feel bad about not having kids but I don't like them and they don't like me. Why I ever started this lame company is beyond me other than it's been so easy to make a nonprofit look like a NONprofit. Suckers. I bet I can keep up the charade of making people think I can't have kids after they hear about the divorce. They'll think he left me because of that. How sad! Evil Jim leaves poor me, CEO of a K–12 Public Education Fund who can't even have her own children. Ha! Brilliant. The money will come pouring in—and I'll have to up my salary again, they can't say no now that I'm on my own financially, so there's that bonus. All right, well I feel better already—love journaling. Seems to be the only thing I tell people I do that I actually do. Gotta get to sleep—

early morning showing up at the gym for coffee again. No one is the wiser that I don't work out before hitting the gym Starbucks. God, who has time for that. Besides, it's easier to stay this thin by not eating or by eating and barfing.

Note to self: call doc for a refill on the oxy, try "back pain" this time.

Are the public and private sides of you diverging more than usual? Sound familiar? If so, great job! Look, we're all human, and we all have the normal everyday life struggles to contend with, but like they say, "Don't let 'em see you sweat!" You'll hear all kinds of advice about being *authentic* or *genuine* or even that overused term *vulnerable*, but following advice like this will only expose your true weaknesses (if you actually have any), and that's just not good for your personal brand. It's certainly not real leadership.

You're the leader, and you need to give everyone around you the impression that you always have it together. You're smart and in charge, period. This isn't hard to do, but it's hard to be consistent about doing it. Flaws (inconsistencies) in your story lead to questions about your authenticity, and the biggest trick to being authentic is appearing to be authentic all the time. So here are a few tips and tricks to keep your story straight:

- Develop an image of how you want others to see you, and then be that person.
- Remember your lies and keep them consistent. Never ever deviate from your original story.
- Invest your energy in activities, friendships, and interests that make you look more interesting and more thoughtful than you are (you don't have time to be thoughtful).
- Pretend to care, and feign interest in things and people that bore you.
- Keep your actual personal life entirely to yourself.
- Never ever say, "I don't know."

No one really needs or wants to know your dirty laundry. It's dirty. The only reason people get caught up in scandals or fraud is because they talk too much. Don't try to explain away things that don't make sense or numbers that don't add up. Let someone else do that, and just keep repeating your standard stump speech. Eventually people will get tired and stop asking. If you ever actually do get caught with your pants down or your hand in the cookie jar, blame another person or a mental breakdown. Remember, it's never ever ever your fault. And, if they get too close to what is actually happening or to the manufactured truth, use the bright, shiny star tactic: "Look, over there!" Deflect, diffuse, confuse works every time. Do anything to get the attention away from the dirty laundry, which again, no one really wants to see.

Let's Get Real

Truth be told, authenticity (the real kind) is one of the most important values that a great leader can have. It's not a buzzword to be glossed over, taken lightly, or casually woven into the core values of a company. It's something that requires a lot of personal thought and exploration, maturity, security, and sense of self. Of course we're not proposing that you overshare details that compromise your privacy or constantly blather on about your problems. What we are proposing is that you accept the fact that you're human, and be the only human that you are at all times.

Companies often go through long, arduous processes of defining their company values without first doing the important work of defining the values of the people as individuals. Understanding your own values, and making them known to everyone you encounter through your actions (assuming of course that your values are good) is what good leadership is all about. Strong personal values and a moral compass that is pointing in the right direction are what allow you to be imperfect, to make mistakes, and to ask for help when you need it.

As the leader of any organization or group, you are the ethical compass. You have the fiduciary duty, whether real or implied, to operate honestly, ethically, and morally. If you don't, neither will anyone who works for you. There are not shades of the truth. There is not *truthiness* there is only *the truth*, and as a leader, you will know what that is.

It takes a lot of energy to keep up the charade. Keepin' it real takes none at all.

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(How Not to) Be a Leader

by Mary E. Marshall & Kim Obbink

(How NOT to) Be a Leader is the first in a series of how-not-to guides for newly minted leaders looking to avoid becoming feared or hated losers in the ivory tower or veteran leaders looking in the rearview mirror wondering where and why they ran off the road. Irreverent and hilarious, *(How NOT to) Be a Leader* shines a big bright spotlight on the oh-so-common mistakes that many leaders make when they plow forward through life and business without taking the time to really consider the effect their leadership is having on others. We've all seen and heard the horror stories of bad leadership, and hopefully many of us have been lucky enough to have been the benefactor of truly great leadership. Either way, if it's your turn at the top, *(How NOT to) Be a Leader* will help you understand what you can do to be a better leader by first understanding what you should never ever do; and if you are, why you should back up the truck, take another look at yourself and your leadership qualities, and do the work and self-reflection needed to get back on track.

Why this book series? Having been in the leadership trenches for a combined fifty years, we've seen a lot. Some good, some bad, and some really, really horrible. There was no guide for us, and we want to help all those leaders who will come after us. Not with a boring manifesto about a fictional leader who only exists in a book, but with real-life stories we've experienced or even perpetrated ourselves and vow never to repeat.

This book consists of twenty-four characteristics that you don't want to be known for. Not all twenty-four will apply to you and a few might resonate louder than others. What was it you heard in your last 360? Micromanaging doesn't work? You aren't listening? You want everyone to do it your way? You might have a few to work on, and our challenge to you is to choose three or four that seem the most immediate and start working on those. Once you've mastered them, take on a few more. And certainly share the book with those around you whose leadership styles need a little polish.

Should you accept this leadership challenge, you will be able to quickly identify twenty-four ineffective leadership traits and make changes to positively address them. Through the stories in this book, you will learn how to avoid the pitfalls of leadership, how to be a better leader, and, most importantly, how to pass good leadership on to those you lead.

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