



## Leading Out Loud

Inspiring Change Through Authentic Communication

by Terry Pearce  
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### Focus

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### Take-Aways

- In today's global climate leaders face skepticism, anxiety and apathy.
- Authentic human connection is the dynamic most missing from and most craved in today's work environment.
- To lead others you must have a personal, passionate vision for change.
- To lead others you must find your natural, authentic voice for communication.
- To lead others you must develop emotional intelligence and help others connect to you.
- Use your communication platform to establish your credibility and your case for change.
- Reveal personal stories and vulnerabilities in appropriate ways to establish authenticity.
- Engage your team by empowering them to create a positive future and by calling them to action.
- Acknowledge resistance and create a climate where it can be aired and resolved.
- Practice daily awareness of authenticity in all your communication efforts.

### Rating (10 is best)

Overall	Applicability	Innovation	Style
<b>7</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>4</b>

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## Relevance

### What You Will Learn

In this Abstract you will learn: 1) Why it is so hard to lead today; 2) How authentic leadership and passion can make change happen; 3) How to find your authentic voice; and 4) How to communicate authentically to inspire and connect with others.

### Recommendation

Business coach Terry Pearce teaches you how to put the personal perspective back into your professional communications. With a credible and authoritative voice, he explains how authentic human connection is missing from today's communications, even though people crave it, especially as they evaluate who they trust to lead them through rapid change. He maintains that leaders who communicate authentically and passionately will inspire loyalty and make their mark. While Pearce is clearly convinced about the importance of inspiring your constituents, the pace of his book won't exactly move your spirit. He walks you slowly and carefully through the discipline he uses to help clients rediscover their authentic voices and craft messages that resonate. His corporate and political client list is quite select, but *getAbstract.com* finds his communication strategies relevant for anyone who is leading change — whether you are building a small community or a large company.

## Abstract

### Creating Change Today

Today's leaders have it tough. You are up against skepticism, born of the last half century's political scandals and the more recent spate of fraudulent corporate practices. You confront general anxiety brought on by rapid technological advancement, globalization, cultural shifts, terrorism and economic decline. With today's technology, your constituents are all likely to be well-informed and highly critical. Disillusioned, they no longer expect their leaders, including you, to provide meaning, security and happiness. They expect to do it themselves.

Leaders can penetrate this fog of skepticism, anxiety, apathy and lowered expectations with authentic communication. Personal and economic distance between leaders and their teams, as well as the huge role of the media — with its images of perfection and detached talking heads — has set up a cultural craving for authentic human connection, especially in the workplace. Ironically, as the need for authentic leadership increases, it seems to be practiced less and less.

People commit to people they trust and to projects that reflect their values. To get your team's commitment, communicate in your authentic voice and help them feel personally connected to you. Reconnect with your personal passion for change and convert it into a powerful message. Develop your emotional intelligence to connect with others more effectively and cultivate a personal awareness of how to stay authentic in all your communications with your team. Authenticity makes the difference between directing a company and leading the individuals in that company, but you have to work to achieve it.

### How to Be Authentic

Authentic communication starts with knowing yourself. If you have never sat down and thought about why you want to be a leader (not just “the boss”) and what changes you want

“Leaders who can communicate both logic and passion are deploying themselves fully.”

“The primary distinction between a leader and someone who merely conceives and expresses good ideas or examples, or one who merely gets good results, is the ability to relate to others.”

“Good leaders get people to work for them. Great leaders get people to work for a cause that is greater than any of them — and then for one another in service of that cause.”

“Required action differs in both quantity and substance from inspired action.”

“The prophet is the visionary who imagines a describable future and then declares it to the rest of the world.”

to bring about, you will never be able to inspire a group of people to follow you. Before you can create buy-in for your personal change message, you must rediscover what you are passionate about and make a conscious decision to be a leader on this issue.

First, reflect on yourself. Who are you? What experiences have had the most impact on you and now drive your decisions? What questions do you wrestle with daily? What do you want to teach your children? What future do you envision? What changes do you want to make? Why? Often you can spot your most important issues because they show up regularly in your personal and professional life. Identify the main issues where you want to create change.

Determine how you want to speak about this change. Most of us have abandoned the impulsive, passionate voices of our youth to sound more grown up and acceptable. If everything you write or say “sounds like a memo,” be brave and experiment with censoring yourself less. That youthful voice has a lot of power and can be put to good use in leadership communication. At the same time, do not rant and rave. Use personal writing as a discipline to clarify both your passion and your position. A disciplined communication voice that harnesses your deep convictions will convey confidence and competence. Craft a simple call for change that expresses who you are, what you want and why this change matters. Your excitement and commitment can create excitement and commitment in others.

Consciously choose to be a leader. To lead, you must understand others and how you relate to them. People connect a lack of empathy to a lack of character. Empathic, “emotionally intelligent” leaders recognize their feelings and the feelings of others. They communicate in an emotional language that helps others “resonate” with their vision, manage their egos, hone in on what they feel and respond in a way that builds trust. To develop your emotional intelligence, be more aware of your emotions. Learn how and when to communicate them. Don’t fear other people’s emotions — respond and relate to them instead of just reacting. Remember, leading your team is different from controlling your team.

### Your Leadership Message

Once you are clear about your passion, your change message and your commitment to lead, you are ready to begin crafting a powerful leadership message. To inspire others and guarantee their commitment to you and your cause, your message must connect personally. Step by step, lay out your credentials and trustworthiness, provide meaning for the change you champion, describe a positive future and call your team to action. Include these steps:

- Create connection — Help your audience experience your authentic enthusiasm and inspiration. Use language that circumvents your audience’s internal critics and goes straight to their memories and feelings. Used well, this language creates “resonance,” or an unconscious sense of connection to you. Include powerful images and metaphors to conjure up sights, smells and emotional responses. Tell stories that illustrate your ideas instead of dry, abstract concepts. Listeners rarely evaluate stories for credibility the way they evaluate data. Stories are processed by a different part of the brain and help establish empathy. Some stories can be about you. This is a powerful advocacy technique that creates connections as others relate to your experiences. Use personal stories sparingly. Make sure they are on message and illustrate data; avoid being emotionally manipulative.

“The strongest leaders are those who have experienced or personally witnessed the negative effects of the status quo and the subsequent transformative power of change.”

“Change occurs when it is time. A leader notices that history has pointed the way toward change and by communicating makes the direction of change obvious to others.”

“To avoid asking for action is to avoid bringing others to the door of commitment.”

- Build credibility — Your ultimate goal is to get your team to embrace your vision for change. First you must get them to embrace you by establishing trust. Give your personal credentials for championing the cause, including personal, first-hand experience with the issue and its impact on your life. Note your professional qualifications and give evidence (facts, examples and stories) for why the change must happen. Reveal some vulnerabilities or shortcomings; this level of honesty will build trust, make you appear more accessible and diffuse potential criticism.
- Acknowledge resistance — Express gratitude and acknowledge that not everyone agrees with you. Let your team know that you see their work and appreciate it. This is not mere ego stroking. It shows you understand them, so they become more likely to open up to you. As a leader, you must reorient your relationship to resistance. Resistance to change is natural and, in most cases, rational. Acknowledging other points of view creates a climate in which your team feels free to allow their concerns to surface. If their concerns do not surface, resistance will fester and interfere with their commitment and productivity. Most people are afraid to disagree with a leader. By acknowledging resistance and inviting feedback, you diffuse latent fear and anger. You will seem more like a partner and less like an adversary. While this approach does not guarantee that everyone will agree with your opinion, it will win loyalty.
- Establish context — Educate your audience about why the change is needed now. Construct a “common understanding,” or shared narrative about the history, implications and consequences surrounding the issue in question. Provide everyone with the same answer about why this change is needed and what the big picture is. What does it mean? What will the global impact be? What is its moral and personal value? Not only can your audience handle this level of thinking, they are eager to be engaged with it. Let them get fired up. When creating this shared narrative, balance personal passion with hard data, explain how you fit into the greater context. Provide history and facts to make the context you have established reliable and verifiable.
- Prophecy — Describe the future in an inspiring way. Write about the future you want to create. Help your audience imagine the world after your change. Use analogy, metaphor, story and personal experience. Call on your team to work together toward a vivid future in which they have a personal stake. Compare and contrast the best and worst possible futures, based on the success or failure of your change vision.
- Call to action — Now point the way forward. Describe the actions you personally will accomplish to make this change happen. State the risks you will face and the sacrifices you will make, which will likely generate feelings of self-doubt. Before finalizing this part of your message, use writing to get those voices of doubt out of your system. Writing should help excavate your convictions and your action steps. When selecting actions, ask yourself what steps you might take that would generate the most committed actions from your team. Imagine an “impact meter” and go for the highest rating possible.
- Seal their commitment — The second part of your call to action is to ask your constituents to take a step that seals their commitment to your plan for change. Some leaders are not comfortable asking their people to take action. If you cannot do this, you risk creating a culture of “passing the buck,” in which everyone thinks that someone else is taking responsibility. By asking for action, you are asking everyone to make a personal choice to come on board. The actions you request should be clear, simple and meaningful.

“Authenticity is the bridge from compliance to commitment, from satisfaction to loyalty, from mere change to progress.”

“The energy of collective conviction will fuel answers to the complex questions of global competition, national social malaise, fanatical extremism and international cooperation.”

## Daily Awareness and Authenticity

Now that you have a personal change message, a powerful leadership platform and emotional intelligence for connecting to others, try to communicate authentically with your team every day to inspire them to act for change. This daunting task requires a high level of personal awareness and no one does it perfectly.

Speeches will be an obvious and primary method of delivering your message. However, every time you respond to questions or challenges, you have an opportunity to inspire, whether in a formal Q & A or when someone steps into your office for a chat. To respond to questions authentically, acknowledge the asker, not just the question; listen well; avoid being defensive; communicate that you understand their feelings; find points of commonality between your views and ask to make sure you’ve answered their concerns.

Figure out the hidden intent of the question, that is, the question they really want to ask but are perhaps afraid to challenge you about. Usually, your intuition will tell you what they are really saying. Ignoring their true question would be inauthentic for you, even if they do not communicate it directly, and they will pick up on your evasiveness if you don’t address it. Answer both the stated and the unstated questions.

In addition to questions, concerns and challenges that come your way, have constant informal conversations. Each one is an opportunity to convey your leadership message authentically. E-mails, coffee dates, press interviews, water cooler chats — each time you must communicate your message and your desire to connect. This means bringing the real you to the table every time. This is why your fundamental message must be authentic, must originate with who you are.

Especially when communicating with employees, maintain a “leadership perspective.” Find proactive ways to maintain connection, availability, understanding, appreciation, support and inspiration to keep everyone focused and moving ahead. The heart of this communication is your personal desire not to settle for less, to always inspire and not just inform, to be a leader and not just a boss.

## About The Author

Terry Pearce, the “elder statesman” of executive coaching, heads the consulting firm, Leadership Communication. He is a teacher and best-selling author.

## Buzz-Words

Authenticity / Change message / Context / Emotional intelligence