

## IF YOU THINK YOU CAN FAKE AUTHENTICITY – HERE’S A TIP. DON’T.



“AUTHENTICITY” has become a corporate buzzword in recent years but is it in danger of being rendered meaningless by overuse?

Most often it has been employed in content marketing where “authenticity” is seen as the holy grail of a relationship with an audience.

The premise is that the more authentic a company behaves, the better it will resonate with its key audiences.

Have businesses changed their behaviour to achieve this high watermark or are they just paddling faster in the same depths?

First we need to define “authenticity”.

A dictionary definition refers to its meaning as being of “undisputed origin”, “not a copy” or “genuine”. The origin of the word can be traced to the late Middle English period and then across the Channel to Old French. Then it’s on to the late Latin “authenticus” before coming home to the Greek “authentikos” – “principal”, “genuine”. In philosophical terms (existentialism), authenticity is the degree to which one is true to one’s own personality, spirit or character, despite external pressures.

The philosophical definition provides a relevant starting point for an examination of corporate “authenticity”.

Can a business be truthful and transparent when its story is only (usually) ever only half told? As a career communicator I know that companies mostly only put their best foot forward and tend to bypass explanation of all the potholes, roadblocks, road rage and other obstructions they have faced.

If they do obliquely reference those trials, they are camouflaged by obscuring management speak and buzzwords. The reasoning is that the key shareholders and stakeholders would not want to be given any information that might cause them to lose confidence in the management or board.

But the real outcome is that the connection with the key audiences who buy their product is weakened because the company is not trusting them enough to be straight with them.

The key to authenticity is transparency. Full transparency.

Your authentic story is the warts and all, full disclosure of how you have got to where you are now and how much you have bled to have got there.

Your real story is full of suspense and drama; it is full of characters, good and bad; it is full of quests – successes and failures, laughter and tears.

Companies are people and wherever people collect you get stories and stories cannot be censored. Stories must be free. Freedom and transparency create authenticity.

And authenticity delivers closer relationships with key audiences.

Ray Sparvell  
Special Counsel

+61 8 9381 2144

[www.publicrelations.com.au](http://www.publicrelations.com.au)