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FIRM MANAGEMENT

Worlds Will Collide: Why Being Real is the Only Way

In professional settings, it's easy to choose one side of our personality to showcase, while leaving other sides in the shadows. As we work, play, influence, and interact with the world around us, we're challenged to make decisions about which sides ...

Amy Vetter • Dec. 03, 2018



How would you describe yourself? Does that description vary depending on the audience? How do you think other people describe you?

In professional settings, it's easy to choose one side of our personality to showcase, while leaving other sides in the shadows. As we work, play, influence, and interact with the world around us, we're challenged to make decisions about which sides of ourselves to bring to the forefront.

I have noticed that [the idea](#) of authenticity has become more commonplace in our profession, because authenticity really *does* matter. When you make a conscious decision to hide parts of our personalities depending on your surroundings, you're limiting yourself in more ways than you might realize. Even if it can feel tough to

blend the many many different sides of yourself together, you'll find when you used for its benefit, you will be better at influencing those around you and leading with purpose.

Identify your sides

Bringing all of your “sides” together in harmony is hugely important if you want to find the confidence to build your career and meet your goals in work and life. Many people stagnate in their career and wonder if there is more out there. However; we can bring greater meaning to work when we bring our whole self there. In his [book](#) *Leading the Life You Want: Skills for Integrating Work and Life*, Stewart Friedman, a professor at the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School defines authentic leadership as “Acting with a sense of authenticity means being yourself wherever you are.”

So how does that apply to you? Start by classifying a side of your personality that is something uniquely you, understanding that this side doesn't make up the whole. For example, you might be very musically inclined, you love to dance, and find it very hard to resist musical theatre. Another side of you may be that you are a strict disciplinarian, or someone who people look up to for speaking your mind. The two aren't mutually exclusive, but somewhere along the line, and in some context you separated them.

If you find yourself being a more disciplined, data-driven person around sales professionals and a more relaxed person with creatives, you're not doing anything wrong, but you could be missing out on some really interesting conversations and opportunities to blend two very real parts of your personality. By first identifying who you are and the multiple facets that make up you as a unique person, you'll have much better luck bringing everything together.

Understand that worlds will always collide

I used to hold the perception that the certain people in certain situations wouldn't accept me for who I was because they only know me as one specific type. People didn't want to see inconsistency. They wanted what they expected.

For instance, at that time, it was difficult for me to let my colleagues know about the yoga side of my life. I didn't want them to pass judgment on me, or for my inner pursuits to affect me professionally. Conversely, I didn't want to tell my yoga class that I was also a CPA, technologist, and traveling keynote speaker.

Then, one day, it happened. One of my clients walked in to a yoga class, totally unaware that I was the instructor. Upon recognizing me, they began referencing our business relationship, and soon enough the class was mumbling. Eventually one student piped up. “Did I hear that right, Amy?” she asked. “You’re a CPA?”

To my surprise, the realization brought us all closer. Students started sharing more, and I found that understanding my background somehow made them more interested in my class.

Learning from this, I thought I’d experiment with bringing up yoga at work. Again, I found that people loved hearing more about my outside interests, and they were more apt to sharing theirs as well. This created an entirely new sense of connectedness, and bonded us as co-workers in a way that was completely unexpected.

Bring your sides together

So, how do we prepare to reveal our authentic self, no matter what situation we might be in? Whether you’re at work, at home, with friends, or by ourselves, be mindful of your different sides and how you’re expressing them. Is one side dominating? How do you take the person you see in the mirror, the person you love and enjoy being, and integrate it into all aspects of your life?

Dedicate time each day to yourself. [Taking time to reflect](#) can lead to a happier, more successful life. And taking five, ten, or even 30 minutes every day to work on your thoughts, consider your feelings and why you might be holding back and letting people know who you are authentically. You may find you can do this through meditation or journaling. Breaking these thoughts down into manageable pieces will help you work toward being more authentic to yourself and the people around you. Try testing some conversation at work about your outside interests, as well as, ask questions of the people you work with and your clients as well about their interests. You may be surprised what you find out, which can only make your bonds stronger in the workplace.

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