



## ***On Football and Credibility***

Lou Holtz, football coach, talks about how he created a team year-after-year. His college football teams changed personnel every year. But, his questions\* to each person were always the same:

1. Do you care about me?
2. Can I trust you?
3. Are you committed to the success of the team?

Holtz believed the answers to these questions are best given through actions. When we consistently act in an authentic and trustworthy manner, we will gain trust. But what do those words mean? And, how can we develop them in ourselves?

Authenticity arises from being yourself, which comes from the story you've lived. Being authentic means knowing and living your story. Authentic leaders are steady, confident, and consistent. They are the same person day-in and day-out.

A variety of things make up each person's story. Some parts of ourselves we inherit, either through genetics or people who act as honorary relatives. Other parts of our experience come from people in our lives who have noticed our gifts and suggested we develop those gifts. Some of our journey is self-determined by the choices we've made. Differences and unique abilities can change the life path we experience.

Ask yourself: Which of these things are a part of your journey? What brought you to the place you hold as a leader? What and who called you to the work you care deeply about? Who are the mentors and teachers who influenced you – the ones whose voices live inside your head, supporting your life? Who are your mentors now, the ones who hold you accountable? Are you leading from a position of authenticity?

Trustworthiness is made up of several things: sincerity, reliability, competence, and care. Sincerity is honesty: you say what you mean and mean what you say. Your opinions are backed by the facts and sound thinking. Reliability means you keep your commitments and promises. Competence says you have the knowledge, skills, and resources to do your job. Caring is keeping other's interests in mind as you act and make decisions. When we say someone is trustworthy, we may mean one or all of these things. Likewise, saying that someone is untrustworthy may mean they have failed at one or more of these things.

Ask yourself, how am I acting in ways that build sincerity, reliability, competence, and caring? Are you able to observe trustworthiness in others through the four ways of distinguishing trustworthiness? In which areas do I need to grow and be held accountable?

Leaders who are authentic and trustworthy have the ability to create and manage teams for each season. They mentor and teach others, developing capacity and connection, calling each person to develop their gifts and skills. They work with individuals, creating a team identity and purpose. They inquire into their team's experience in order to know and live the team's story along with their own.

I challenge you to spend time reflecting on how you bring authenticity and trustworthiness to your role. Ask yourself Holtz's three questions and ask them to your team. Then make your actions speak louder than your words.

*\*Holtz quote from "The Art of Innovation" by Tom Kelley, p. 85*

Copyright 2011. Kathleen Friesen. All rights reserved.

Kathleen can be reached at [kkfriesen@friesengroup.net](mailto:kkfriesen@friesengroup.net).

First published in the *Kansas EMS Chronicle*.