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## WHAT'S THE BIG IDEA?

### AUTHENTICITY

Great if you can fake it. But none of us do that, do we? I mean, did you ever meet anyone who considered himself to be inauthentic? We are all the heroes of our lives – hypocrisy is something other people suffer from. But we do care desperately if our leaders don't walk their talk, act unethically, appear to be posing, or fail to keep their promises. We want to feel secure that our leaders are real people and are not acting out of heavily disguised self-interest. To seem authentic, my colleagues Goffee and Jones advise leaders to selectively reveal weaknesses, making a nice little feature of them. One can get cynical about this, too much 'authenticity' from our leaders is embarrassing and unseemly. Indeed, under close examination, the notion looks like a muddled bundle of moral approbations that we seek to stick on to our leaders. But, before we throw this concept's body off the bridge, let's go through its pockets. The essence of leadership is adding value that can only come from the identity of the leader. That's the vital nugget at the core of authenticity. Nigel Nicholson is professor of organisational behaviour at the London Business School



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