

Book Review on
“Leading with Authenticity in Times of Transition”

by Kerry A. Bunker and Michael Wakefield

(Review by Gary Tomlinson)

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Change and transition are no longer periodic events. Today, they are the ongoing and natural state of many organizations. Senior-level managers are highly skilled in leading and managing the structural side of change: creating a vision, reorganizing, restructuring, and so on. But rarely do managers fully grasp or focus on the human side of change: grieving, letting go, building hope, and learning. And when leaders do pay attention to the deeper emotions and behaviors tied to difficult change, few know how to appropriately address those emotions and behaviors.

While there are many books, strategic consultants, and executive workshops dedicated to change management, few if any answer the crucial question that change poses: *how do leaders in real settings with real people help themselves and others work through difficult times?*

The answer, though complex and demanding, is grounded in the authenticity of leaders and hinges on trust. Building trust requires leaders to be honest and genuine. In today’s changing times, the most authentic, effective leaders find a way to address the emotions of transition. Authentic leaders can effectively deal with the structural side of change and guide people through the transition that accompanies change. For these reasons, I have chosen Bunker’s & Wakefield’s *Leading with Authenticity in Times of Transition* for this month’s book review.

Bunker & Wakefield says the challenge of leading organizations through change goes beyond setting strategy, making plans, and implementing the structures and processes of change. They believe the real struggle lies in managing the long-term aspects of recovery, revitalization, and recommitment. In other words, the significant work of managing change requires leaders to focus simultaneously on managing the business and providing effective leadership to the people. More often than not, it is the focus on the people side of leadership that loses out.

They go on to say that the risk leaders face in minimizing or ignoring the human side of leadership is twofold. First, they may prevent or undermine the organization’s structural and strategic goals by failing to gain sufficient buy-in and commitment from employees. Second, they may destabilize the organization’s culture and erode trust and values that engender dedication. Loyalty and trust give way to insecurity and fear, while productivity and enthusiasm are displaced by withdrawal and skepticism.

Bunker & Wakefield believes that in order for leaders to effectively harness and maintain the talent and commitment needed to benefit from organizational change, they must:

1. Examine their behaviors and emotions tied to change and transition.

2. Establish and protect trust.
3. Find a balance between structural leadership and people leadership.

By presenting a framework for understanding these issues, describing specific competencies, illustrating them in a real way, and providing tips and tactics for their use, their book will assist leaders, coaches, consultants – indeed entire management teams who are charged with leading themselves and others in a constantly changing workplace.

Bunker & Wakefield uses the image of a bicycle wheel to describe the leadership competencies that are important during times of transition. **Trust** is the hub of their wheel. Radiating out from that hub are the spokes, which represent the twelve competencies that support authentic, effective leadership in times of transition. Six spokes represent structural competencies; the other six represent people-related competencies. Any of the twelve competencies can be overdone, underdone, or held in a positive, dynamic balance (as the spokes on a bicycle wheel are set in a balanced tension). The six pairs of competencies are as follows:

1. *Catalyzing Change* versus *Coping with Transition*
2. *Sense of Urgency* versus *Realistic Patience*
3. *Being Tough* versus *Being Empathetic*
4. *Optimism* versus *Realism & Openness*
5. *Self-reliance* versus *Trust Others*
6. *Capitalizing on Strengths* versus *Going Against the Grain*

Bunker & Wakefield says the key to leading with authenticity in extraordinary times is to neither exaggerate nor downplay any of the twelve competencies. Their book presents a framework for understanding the competencies required to respond to the demands of maintaining the business while attending to the equally important “people” concerns. It provides insight for leaders so that they can decipher and adjust their behavior to maintain the crucial balance between the structural side of leading change and the human side of leading transition.

Enjoy this month’s selection, *Leading with Authenticity in Times of Transition* and share it with others in your life because as Alvin Toffler says; “*The illiterate of the 21st Century will not be those who cannot read or write, but those who cannot learn, unlearn, and relearn.*”