

The Legacy Lounge Podcast with Tiffany Neuman
Season 1, Episode 45
Why Authenticity is NOT the Answer

INTRO: Hi, I'm Tiffany and you are listening to The Legacy Lounge podcast. If you are a high achieving, mission-driven entrepreneur who wants to elevate your income, impact, and influence, you're in the right place.

I left my corporate career as a creative director for Fortune 500 brands to create a legacy with my work and to support entrepreneurs to do the same. I'm not talking about having your name on a building or statues in your image. I'm talking about leaving behind a positive impact and creating something enduring that can be passed on. You pour your time, energy and passion into your business, so let's make sure your efforts will create a ripple effect that reaches far into the future.

Each monthly series will guide you through the business leadership and life skills you need to successfully leave a legacy that stands the test of time, and each episode is totally valuable on its own. We are here to provide you with the tools and ideas to make massive shifts and quantum leaps in your business, transforming you from entrepreneur into legacy brand.

TIFFANY:

"I have a lot of respect for genuine people. They might not be perfect, but at least they're not pretending to be."—Anthony Ducardi.

Did you ever notice how many people are actually telling you to be authentic? I searched on Google and it returns over 62 million results. And of course, you've probably heard fake it until you make it.

Because sometimes you need to adopt a persona and use that as a little bit of a shield until you feel confident enough to feel and be yourself fully. I feel like we've all been there at some point too, but what gets really confusing is when people start to manufacture what's authentic.

I mean, what does that word actually mean anyways? I honestly believe authenticity is overrated, because when you're told to cultivate an online personality that promotes its own authenticity, that just doesn't feel right.

And then there's transparency and what's the difference? Being authentic and transparent are a balancing act, and I truly believe it's getting a mix that's important.

So that led me to the question, why do so many so-called experts encourage us to be more authentic?

There's some good reasons. Most would say it implies that you can be trusted. It suggests that you have certain principles and values that you walk your life through. It implies that you mean what you say. And

most of all, it encourages others to engage with you. And this creates an online personality that is supposedly more respected, more accepted, and more appealing. And this is fine up to a point, but what happens when one creates and I'm saying this in air quotes "authentic personalities" with the intention of misleading others?

Maybe misleading others is wrong word, but okay, say, for instance, somebody's ghost writing on your behalf. This goes on all the time because it's smart to outsource. Does this make a person or a brand any less authentic? Or one of the paradoxes of cultivating your online personality is that whether you like it or not, you're already authentic. You are what you are, right? However, whether others like this personality is another question.

So my concern is that the race to be more authentic might actually be an indirect way to simply want to be liked, which is fine. But the other thing that I see often is it's a way to manipulate others into trusting you, which is not so good in the wrong hands. Telling others you're authentic will hit the wrong note, and it sounds forced if you're saying you're showing up authentically.

I found out that the international leadership industry devotes over \$50 billion a year in training coaching leaders how to be authentic. So I, of course, went down the rabbit hole and I found this man named Jeffrey Pfeffer, who is a Stanford professor and organizational behavior leader. And he makes the case in his book *Leadership BS*—which I love that title, what a good brand—that the celebration of authenticity in leaders is not only unwarranted, it can be counterproductive.

And I was like, yes, this is what I've been feeling, and I haven't really been able to articulate up until now. "In fact," writes Pfeffer, "being authentic is pretty much the opposite of what leaders should be doing. The last thing a leader needs is to be at a crucial moment is authentic. At least if authentic means being both in touch with exhibiting their true feelings. Leaders do not need to be true to themselves. Actually, leaders need to be true to what the situation and what those around want and need from them."

If you think about it, we all arrive as selfish, needy humans who need to be socialized, right? So we learn how to consider and respond to the needs and wants of others. We're taught by our parents, we're taught by society. And sometimes, of course, this goes too far.

But the process of being socialized never truly ends, and it becomes important as people attain positions of leadership. So another person I respect is Seth Godin. And I remembered back in the day he spoke on this topic. So I looked up what he also said, and he says, "authenticity is a trap, you were three months old with a diaper on when you truly were fully authentic. Ever since then, you've been intentional. You may have done things with intent on purpose. You wake up every morning, and on some days maybe you don't feel like getting to work, but you do it anyways because you made a commitment. Being authentic would be staying in bed and doing nothing."

Or what if you were a doctor and you had a surgery scheduled and you had a fight with your wife before? Are you just going to say, yeah, I don't really feel like it, or I'm just going to wing it today, it doesn't really

matter if I do a good job? No, that's not what the client or the patient would want. So what he says is that what people actually want from us is consistency. So for me, what it means to be consistent is having empathy, to allow people to be human. It doesn't mean that you're always sharing authentically what's on your mind.

It means you're willing to be generous enough to see people. It means to show up like a human, which you could call authenticity if you want. But what I hear there is humanity. People are asking to be seen and to be treated like a human. It's not a slogan that makes us feel seen.

It's not a logo that makes us feel seen. What makes us feel seen is someone who takes the time to see us, hear us, and help solve our problems. So I'm going out on a limb here today with perhaps a very controversial idea, which is: we should not be fully authentic.

If you have a business, the opportunity here lies in your brand and positioning.

Yes, stand for something. Hold commitments, be consistent, and within those boundaries, of course, show up as a person, not a robot. Because now more than ever, a polished persona is not the answer either. But neither is being fully authentic. So just bear with me if you think I'm crazy, right?

Having a business is not actually about you. It's you showing up as a guide for other people and knowing that people want to be seen and heard. Now, of course, if you are, say, an instagram influencer and you're making money off sharing your lifestyle, that's a different story. People love the drama of that type of authenticity. But as a business owner and a thought leader, you actually need to think before you show up.

And as women, we've been told forever not to speak up, not to show up boldly. So I get it. We are fairly new in our freedom to shout whatever we want from the rooftops, and authenticity is especially promoted in the young female celebrity influenced culture.

So there's this lyric from a song that I actually really like that says, "I always say what I'm feeling. I was born without a zip on my mouth." So bonus points if you know who that song was and drop it in the comments below. But I actually really like this song. I jam out to it when I'm riding my peloton, I'm not going to lie, but these words are, in my opinion, justifications for people feeding their own ego by undermining the status of others and therefore raising their own.

Honestly, I'm pretty tired of seeing people being canceled, canceling themselves for the sake of making a stir or people talking shit about each other online. Let's be clear. I am not advising you to withhold your opinions, because clearly I wouldn't be saying this if I was. This is a pretty strong opinion right now.

What I'm saying is be free. Be yourself. Express your thoughts and feelings, but do it in a way that will benefit the world and those around you, not cause harm. We can all be better people if we just learn to think before we speak and see the world from the eyes of others. And maybe, just maybe, this will have a

positive impact on the mental health of society overall. It goes back to that old idea of if you have nothing good to say, don't say anything at all.

Now, the other hand, if you're wanting to be seen as a thought leader and creating a business based on service, what I'm truly getting to here is, rather than always being your authentic self, you actually have to direct your behavior according to what you need to do to be successful, regardless of how you feel in the moment. Because learning and adapting to what we do never stops. This is what I personally like to call living genuinely and being true to yourself rather than the overused word of being authentic. So now you're probably thinking, okay, I hear you, Tiffany. No more authenticity.

But what the heck does it actually mean to be true to yourself? Is that your high school self? Your college self? Your career self? Your role as a friend, your role as a family member, as a spouse, as a mother, a leader?

Like, there's so many times that you could show up. So the thing is, we need to grow, develop, and change and not get stuck in our temporarily authentic cells. Because our world is fast changing and uncertain. We as leaders need to figure out how to be effective regardless of our own wants and needs and learn how to be successful in an always changing landscape. If you're a true leader, you stay in your lane, serve from the heart, and show up genuinely.

One of the most important leadership skills is the ability to act like a leader, to act in a way that inspires confidence and gains support even if you do not, in the moment, actually feel confident or powerful. I can say that I actively do this myself all the time. It's the adage feel the fear and do it anyways. So, I mean, think about it. Do you truly think the leaders that you look up to always act 100% authentically? No.

Yes, it's awesome to share vulnerable moments and allow people to see you as a human. Of course.

This is a huge part of your brand too, because we want people to get to know all aspects of you. Yet being 100% authentic all the time, again, is not the answer.

Recently, I went through a pretty complex brand definition process with a client. When we were defining her strategy, I found out that she had become pretty much infatuated with the word authenticity as a buzzword, and she didn't really see how, if used incorrectly, it could actually maybe do more harm than good. But once we discussed what I'm talking about here, now, on a deeper level, we decided to drop it from her messaging and looked instead at how actions, not just words, could actually make the brand more powerful.

We made the decision to present the company as genuinely as possible. You see, the answer to powerful brand is living by your values, showing up and having character, a good character, of course, and building trust with our audience and clients. And this is what I again call being genuine. I realized that I might have ruffled a few feathers with this message today. Yet I trust that you received value from this important topic.

As the landscape of online business continues to evolve, we are only going to see things like bro marketing and fake authenticity fall away and leaders who are truly genuine and of service stepping up, in my humble opinion. Which is great because I'm sure if you're listening to this episode, you are the one wanting to truly make a difference and positively impact the world. Yet when you mean well, it's easy to come off as too soft or stay behind the scenes. And often when we see people using fake authenticity just to make a sale and even well meaning people can do this, by the way, unconsciously. The thing is, we know that if you do not have brand power, you'll be left behind.

So I think so many people confuse this fake authenticity with giving them brand power. But the thing is, most small businesses are positioned as a commodity. And because of this, we hear things like, I'm amazing at what I do, but I never feel like there's enough qualified leads to achieve steady growth. Or if people just saw what I'm doing and people just knew what I was capable of and what the work I do is capable of, I would have all the clients in the world, or perhaps I have a great offer and my clients get amazing results, but I'm still a best kept secret. Or the one I get the most is I don't have any consistency in my business.

It's this constant feast or famine. And these are all things that you will feel when your brand is positioned as a commodity. When you're forcing authenticity. These are things that you'll feel when you're not positioned as a category of one. When you don't create your blue ocean, or even if you're in a blue ocean, you're not necessarily creating a category of one brand.

That is why I want you to not only understand why you should not be fully authentic, but that everything hinges on your brand. Because if you did have all the leads in the world and you don't have your brand dialed in, they're just going to go by the wayside. They're going to go find somebody else to work with. Most people in business think that they have a lead generation problem when really what they have is a brand positioning problem.

So if you're ready to claim your brand as a category of one, no longer be a commodity and really blaze a trail in 2023, if you want to take your leadership to the next level and do it in a very genuine way that feels good and no longer keep trying to figure out what being authentic means. I want you to go ahead and go to the show notes now and sign up for my upcoming brand clarity workshop. This is where I'm going to walk you through exactly what to do to elevate your authority, your positioning, and the thought leadership in your brand with the perfect blend of transparency and genuineness so you can show up as a leader and still be real. I'm running this workshop two times so we hit our global audience time zone. So it's this Wednesday and Thursday, February 1.

And second. So just run over to the Show Notes, click the link, and you can sign up for either time that works best for you. And if you've been listening for a while, you know that I believe in divine timing. If you want to make 2023 your best year ever, really pull in the clients that you've dreamed of. Show up in a way that gives you confidence and clarity.

I promise that you coming to this two hour free event will provide you with so many answers and tools to create a truly powerful magnetic brand to create the income and impact you're dreaming of. I hope to see you there and we'll talk to you really soon. Bye.

OUTRO: That's it for this episode. Thank you for listening to The Legacy Lounge Podcast. Connect with me on Instagram @tiffanyneumancreative I would also love to hear your feedback to see what resonates with you and what you'd like to hear in the future.

If you love this episode, please provide a review and we will be forever grateful. You can always find links and resources shared on the show by going to yourlegacybrand.com.

Remember what you leave behind is not what is engraved in stone monuments, but what is woven into the lives of others. What are you doing today to pour into others and to leave your legacy?