



Hello Supply Chain Students!

It is my pleasure to communicate with you on a regular basis. I find that I connect more often with some of you. I invite all of you into conversation with me. I know you are busy and at the same time I am delighted to work through with you the issues you find in implementing your new found skills for supply chain and leadership.

This month the journal will be committed to discussing a new model I have developed. I have been deeply thinking about this lately. This is the paradigm of polite vs. authentic. It is right to be both polite and authentic. The point of these analyses is that there are times we need to be more polite and times to be more authentic. It is my assumption that many of us tend to find ourselves at one or the other end of this paradigm more often (to our own peril). Further, it is my assumption that trust is build more on the side of authenticity.

Also, we need to use this model (as we do all other models) not just to gauge our own behavior. So first ask, do I treat others with a range of experiences using both politeness and authenticity? Then, we can analyze the ways in which others are treating us with either politeness and/or authenticity. One of the questions we might ask is: Does my significant other treat me with a range of experiences using both politeness and authenticity? Does my authority figure? If not, why not?

To further understand these concepts imagine that the dial above is an odometer on a car. Imagine that extreme politeness is the speed of 0 and brutal authenticity is the speed of 100. Many people spend most of their time at 20 and many others spend a majority of their time at 80. Let me give you two examples:

1. I have a friend named Katie. She spends most of her time at 80. When she first sees me she will often comment on what I am wearing. Recently she has said to me, "Don't wear black – it makes you look old." "Forget that style of pants, Helen, those work better on the younger, thinner women."
2. I also have a friend named Billie. She spends most of her time at 20 (she was raised in the south – not sure if this is a coincidence). We have been best friends for two decades. She rarely comments on what I wear or do and will often encourage me – but I rarely hear any warnings from Billie. Occasionally after I made a(nother) huge mistake I asked Billie if she saw that I was headed on a wrong path. She simply commented. "I wasn't sure."

It is my thesis that in our personal and professional lives we need to exercise some of both politeness and authenticity and not get stuck in one place all of the time. We also need to ask ourselves if others are treating us with a range of politeness and authenticity. Some of the reasons we need to exercise a range of both politeness and authenticity are:

Politeness:

1. We will not be predictable. If people know what we will do or say before we say it they don't need to engage with us to solve problems.
2. If we are always polite people will not see us as sometimes not telling the truth.
3. If we are always polite people will not learn how to trust us and our word.

Authenticity:

1. If we are always authentic we will often leave others with hurt feelings about things that are truly not that important.
2. If we are always authentic we will often gain respect of people and they will often trust our word but they will avoid us as we are "prickly."

Some of the reasons we need to encourage others to exercise a range of both politeness and authenticity toward us are:

Politeness

1. We do not want to have all of the time with other people be "work."
2. We do want to have civility and kindness in our interchanges with others.
3. We do not need to hear all of our faults all of the time.

Authenticity:

1. We need to know the truth from people.
2. We need to develop relationships of trust.
3. We do not want to be "handled" by others.

For further clarification let me give you a few examples of my work in the last month using this model. I work with four organizations right now. I have different capacities in each of these organizations. I am treated with different levels of politeness and authenticity in each of these organizations. I will use the dial above and give the "speed per hour" readings).

- Organization 1: Two of the administrative people treat me with extreme politeness. They do not try to engage with me at all. They are so polite it feels rude. We are not building trust. (20 miles an hour)
- Organization 2: My authority figure has recently admitted to me that I remind him of his mother (yikes, I hate this!). He and I had a long discussion about his politeness toward me and he has agreed to be more authentic. He and I are trying to build trust. (40 miles an hour)
- Organization 3: This group is very authentic with me. They are quick to let me know what I am doing both right and wrong. We have trust. (70 miles an hour)
- Organization 4: This group has a lot of respect for my abilities. So far they have only given me positive feedback. I am encouraging more feedback (50 miles per hour)

I hope this simple model will help you to analyze the ways that you are treating others concerning the paradigm of politeness and authenticity. I also hope that you will analyze and the ways that they are treating you. The goal is to move to about 70 miles an hour. We want to build trust. I also think it is a good idea to enjoy times of not working so hard and just be "polite and nice."