

Authentic is the New Black

Ex- BMW CFO on how finding yourself is the key to success and happiness

Oscar Wilde once said that you might as well be yourself, because everyone else is taken. But in the corporate world, that's notoriously difficult. There's often pressure to conform to a competitive, hierarchical and materialistic culture. For this reason, [Talita Ferreira](#) quit her job as CFO at BMW UK and is setting up the UK's first Academy of Authentic Change.

At the launch of her book, *The Authenticity Dilemma Resolved*, in central London, she described how she felt she was living as a corporate clone, having to wear a mask to fit in and that a lot of her relationships were superficial. It made her stressed and exhausted.

She now believes that being yourself is not only essential for you to be happy, it's also the only viable way to respond to the volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous (VUCA) world we live in. And she's not the only one. The previous day I'd been to an [event at the RSA](#) where the speakers were calling for a similar response to these challenging times.

BAU is not an option

She points out that we're seeing a Fourth Industrial Revolution, quoting a prediction of 40% of jobs to be lost to Artificial Intelligence by 2025. All that will be left are roles that require human connection, creativity and passion. In this world, she postulates, perhaps money will be less necessary as an incentive for people to do things, instead they'll be motivated by purpose and passion.

Ferreira also believes that the masculine-dominated corporate culture is going to be brought more into balance by a cultural shift towards valuing characteristics traditionally seen as feminine. She cited the [Aethena Doctrine](#), a study that found that and more and more people associate nurturing, cooperation, communication, and sharing with happiness and success.

Furthermore, she points out that Millennials are far less willing to conform to corporate cloning and that as they enter the workforce, they will demand a more authentic environment. The shift towards a more authentic business culture is therefore inevitable.

So how can we be more authentic?

She believes that the main reason for the lack of authenticity in the workplace is that not enough people are self-aware or have a sense of purpose. She acknowledges that it takes a lot of effort to develop and it's easier just to fit in. Everyone's just trying to get ahead with the least resistance possible.

Ferreira wants to support business leaders through this process with her book and her Academy of Authentic Change. She wants to help people to connect with their authentic self, to understand their core values and purpose and how to have more connected relationships. Participants will also learn to reduce their ego, let go of self-limiting beliefs and cooperate rather than compete.

Her academy will reframe the battle of the sexes as the battle to tame the 'inner beast'. Just campaigning for there to be more women in the boardroom, she argues, has not led

to the change that's needed. In many cases, women have become successful in business by adopting a more masculine persona and this has just perpetuated the same culture.

Farreira wants to see an end to having to lead separate lives at home and at work. She believes the biggest change would come if the men who support their wives and daughters and at home could apply that same attitude to their female colleagues.

She also wants to teach corporate leaders to be more vulnerable, citing a recent [Google Study](#) that showed that leaders are at their best when they have 'emotional safety' to talk about their emotions and admit mistakes. She believes vulnerability is the birthplace of connection, and that it's the path to feeling worthy.

Farreira wants nothing short of a revolution in corporate culture. A cynic would say it isn't possible. But given the VUCA economic, technological and cultural context, change is inevitable. It's going to be up to those who push hardest which direction it goes in.