

Authenticity: no Excuses.

In an interview with Philomena Colatrella, CEO of the CSS health insurance company, the following was said: "Let's be honest: it is impossible for a leader to be authentic in every situation...you cannot always give full rein to your emotions and thoughts".

Interesting equation: "being authentic" = "giving full rein to your emotions and thoughts at all times". So, if this is true, then I don't want to meet an authentic person. What such emotional incontinence will cause has been demonstrated for some years by the man with the quiff.

That can't be it. If we were constantly throwing every thought at everyone, there would hardly be a stable relationship in the world. A good friend comes around the corner and you think "God, are these shoes ugly..."? You don't say that. You keep that to yourself.

What it's really about is making a good choice. Inside of us it is always chattering, because we are usually not in meditative emptiness, even if you can call that a pity. So, what we say is just a selection from everything that is going through our heads anyway. What is decisive is that *what* we say is authentic. Selective authenticity is what this is called, since quite a long time by the way.

Now, of course, there are situations where even that is difficult:

- If your company is listed on the stock exchange, for example, and you are planning a massive change that is relevant to the stock market, then the regulations prevent you from announcing your plans early on, because of insider trading and stock price influencing and so on. But if rumors are circulating internally and someone asks you directly if there is any truth to it, you are not allowed to confirm this, and all that remains is to deny, remain vague or refuse to comment. You can check with politicians how to do that.
- Or: You are CEO of a listed company and have massive inner doubts whether you can do the job for a long time. Not an option to express this publicly. Well, it would certainly answer the question of whether you can keep on doing the job for much longer...

Mrs. Colatrella was probably referring to such and similar situations anyway. But authenticity has only a marginal connection to this, because even such constraints can be explained once it's out. Being authentic can also mean admitting in retrospect that you felt compelled to conceal some things. As long as this is not based on bad will or taking personal advantage, it even contributes to credibility.

And then here's another question: if I lie by habit, am I authentic while lying? Well, somehow, yes, but only if you are exclusively self-centered and don't care about your relationships with other people. But these would not be good prerequisites for a leader. Why does the quiff come to my mind again? Never mind.

It's obvious that no one can get through the complex web of expectations, demands, constraints and areas of conflict completely untainted. We all decide time and again not to say certain things. The question is, for what reasons do we do so? It helps if you have a functioning moral compass and know who you are. If that guides your actions, you don't need to worry about authenticity.

Your impact as a leader – and, by the way, in general – is based on your doing and your being towards other people. Make sure that these remain as close to each other as possible and that you do not only think of yourself. Then much is already okay.