

Are You Real or Fake?

by Cecile Webster, CPC, CTS

One of the best experiences a recruiter can have is to sit down with a candidate that is comfortable, confident and real. They look you in the eye, precisely expound on their experience, listen when you are talking, and make a good impression when you send them to a client. They are authentic.

Conversely, it's painfully awkward to interview a candidate that is "putting on a show" for you. It's embarrassingly evident when a candidate is saying things that don't quite match who you perceive that they are. Recently, I interviewed a candidate that was dishonest with me. When she started talking about her background, she wasn't herself. She was overconfident and pushy. After years of recruiting, you learn to trust your instinct. Her skills were on target, her personality was good, she was polished, but there was something that didn't sit well with me. I did some research after our interview and found a mark on her background. This situation stimulated a lot of questions for me.

What made me suspicious of her before I found out that she was hiding something? What were the indicators? The only conclusion I came up with was that she wasn't real. She wasn't being authentic, and I knew it. During the interview experience I felt that she was covering something, and it left me with a negative feeling.

Consumers are the same way. The consumer of 2009 is part of the new collective conscience that is a little more cynical, and desires a genuine interaction with the people they do business with.

Recently, I had the opportunity to read [Authenticity](#) by James Gilmore and Joseph Pine II. Gilmore and Pine take a long hard look at the post-modern consumer and what makes them tick. Today, they assert, consumers are looking for an authentic, memorable experience.

Remember when quality was king? It is now a given. Consumers today assume that you will deliver a product that is easy to attain, at a reasonable price, with high level service and quality.



These are no longer points for differentiation, they are expectations. Apparently, a revolution has occurred and authenticity has replaced quality as the criteria of concern when making a purchase..

I guess we should clarify what authenticity means. For business purposes, it is basically the perception that you are who you say you are (as a company) and that what you are selling is what you say it is. This starts with honestly knowing and admitting who you are in the first place. When a consumer encounters you and your product, how do they perceive you?

Gilmore and Pine have created a practical book that will help to guide your company on its way to honest self and consumer perception. They call this "rendering authenticity" and they very clearly assert that this will become a skill that is just as important as "controlling costs" or "improving quality."

There are some axioms contained in Gilmore and Pine's authenticity paradox that you should keep in mind on your journey to authenticity. They are:

- If you are authentic, you don't have to say you're authentic.
- If you say you're authentic, then you'd better be authentic.
- It's easier to be authentic, if you don't say you're authentic

I highly suggest that businesses read this book and re-tool their identity and marketing strategies for a consumer that demands experiential authenticity. Be real with your customers. Make your message congruent with your core values. The result will allow you and your company to join the revolution of reality that is already raging.

