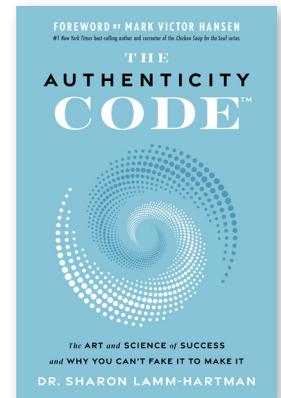


# The Authenticity Code™

The Art and Science of Success and Why You Can't Fake It to Make It

by **Dr. Sharon Lamm-Hartman**



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## THE SUMMARY IN BRIEF

We are always presenting ourselves, whether through formal pitches, informal communications, or interviews for a promotion or an entirely new job. This book addresses some important cutting-edge questions such as: what if instead of thinking authenticity is all about you, you thought of it as being about you and others? What if you could turn your greatest wound into your greatest authentic gift to give? What if instead of thinking of authenticity as a trait like integrity, we reimagined it as a skill that we can learn to become more authentic?

Dr. Sharon Lamm-Hartman wrote *The Authenticity Code™*, because, in the case of communications, those who fake it will never make it. Success in any endeavor demands authenticity, and breaking the code requires this formula: Your Presence + Your Audience + Your Presentation = Your Success. Authenticity is your most powerful way of adding value by expressing your unique gifts and talents for your chosen audience.

## IN THIS SUMMARY, YOU WILL LEARN:

- To focus on your audience for maximum effectiveness.
- To hook your listeners with a strong beginning.
- The elements that make up a cohesive presentation.
- To assess your progress as you prepare for impact.

## Know Your Audience and Yourself

To deliver the most effective presentation you possibly can, it's vital that you know as much about your audience as you can possibly ascertain. The more you know about your audience—especially the key decision maker(s)—the better your presentation will likely go.

### Appearance Matters

Let's say that someone gets hired to play the part of a character at Disneyland. They want to appear as Moana or even Aladdin or Mickey Mouse. If you want to work in a Disney Park, you are deliberately choosing your audience. Kids. Families. Disney management used to prohibit visible tattoos while employees were working.

Recently they changed their policy to allow cast members to show 'appropriate' visible tattoos, yet they still ask that employees choose hair colors that look natural. They ask their employees to think Disney with every move. Would Aladdin chew gum while flying on his magic carpet? Authenticity means dressing, speaking, and acting in ways that are consistent with a company and its culture. If you did not authentically fit with the culture and internal and external audiences, you would have chosen a different company with different audiences.

### Personalities

The people to whom you present all make decisions in different ways. Understanding what is important to them is a critical component for effective communication. If your decision maker is a point person and you are a people person—and you don't present according to their 'get to the point' preferences—you will completely lose your decision maker and, worse yet, frustrate them. The opposite also applies.

### Authentic Brand Statement

There is no point in beginning a journey without having some destination as a goal. The destination may ultimately change over time, but the initial destination is a vital place to begin. Your Authentic Brand Statement is your most powerful way of adding value by expressing your gifts and talents. It is a statement that describes what you came here to do and who you came here to be.

A brand statement may read like this one: I am the CEO of World Wide Synergistics who seeks out and hires the most competent, skilled, innovative individuals I can identify for every position that needs to be filled, and I inspire

and empower them to succeed beyond their greatest expectations. I foster positive attitudes toward our company, and model healthy workplace relationships. I give this by encouraging, supporting, and motivating people to exceed what they thought was possible.

### More than a Presentation

It is difficult to separate the three parts of The Authenticity Code™ because your presence + your audience + your presentation are all critically important for success, and they mix together. The best example of how this works is a smoothie. Smoothies are made of whatever healthy stuff is found in the fridge: bananas, blueberries, strawberries, kiwi, celery, and leafy greens, such as kale. Kale may remind you of sandpaper, but when it's thoroughly blended with the other ingredients, it's not only delicious; it's also energizing! It offers significant health benefits. It's much the same when it comes to the 'ingredients' of The Authenticity Code™. They must be blended to achieve maximum effectiveness.

## Key To a Compelling Presentation

Once you have completed your audience-understanding matrix and know some basics about your audience, you need to plan and rehearse an attention-getting opening that will hook them to listen to you.

### Strong Beginning

When you begin a speech, a sales pitch, a job interview, or any other type of presentation, you only have 90 to 120 seconds to 'grab' your audience. There are time-tested ways to accomplish this daunting feat. The first way to grab attention is through a story. The second way to command attention is through humor. That being said, never begin with a joke, even if you think it won't offend anyone in your audience. Third is to use an analogy or metaphor. A solid fourth way to capture your audience's attention is by asking a question. And the fifth and final attention-getting technique is to begin with a quotation. Your first words would ideally be like a tasty appetizer that whets their appetite and interests them in the full-course meal. Make it short, fast, punchy, interesting, and creative.

### Clear Executive Summary

There are three key parts of an effective Executive Summary:

First, you state your purpose. In many cases, it is to educate or inform. You might be giving a project or program

update, sharing information on a new project or program proposal, describing the value of a product or service, or even sharing why you are the best candidate for a position you are interviewing for.

Second, state your value proposition: What's in it for your audience? Why should they listen to you? What is the bottom-line impact of your presentation? It could be cost savings, market share increase, time and efficiency savings, or some other benefit that the audience will receive from listening to you.

Third, what is the desired outcome? You could be seeking a decision, approval to go to the next step, additional resources, input or feedback, help solving a problem, or help in the process of moving forward to the next step.

## Concise Body Message

The letters in HORSE represent the first letters of words or phrases intended to remind you to have clarity in each of your agenda items so you can tell your audience what you are there to tell them in a clear and concise way.

The H in HORSE represents 'Highlight the main point.' In other words, start with the hottest topic. You also always start with your hottest topic in case your presentation is cut short.

The O in HORSE stands for 'Okay, so what?' 'Okay, so what' simply means that you tell us exactly why your main point—your hottest topic—is important to your listeners.

The R represents 'Relevant information or data.' This is where you present the essential information that supports your 'so what.' That information could include things such as research findings and test results. It also might include what human and technological resources could be required to achieve the desired end.

The S in HORSE tells you to 'Summarize the key point or points.' Sometimes in shorter presentations or with shorter agenda items, this can be optional.

The E represents 'Ease into your next H.' That means to highlight the point of your next agenda item or ease to your close. Create a Transition Statement or use your agenda as a transition slide.

Once you start to use the HORSE to create a clear body message in any presentation or communication, it will become second nature—just like riding a horse!

## Finish Strong

Have you ever gone to a fireworks display, and nothing special happens at the end of the show? No big finish? No finale? You get in your car or board the train to go home, and the big thought on your mind is Well, that sure was a disappointment. I expected more. Just as you, your family members, and other viewers expected a big finish, so the people in the audience for your presentation expect to leave with a thought in their minds: "I get it!" or "That's fantastic!" or "Thank you!"

Finishing strong or ending with a 'Fireworks Close' to your presentation ideally should include a call to action. This is where you come back to the desired outcome you expressed in your Executive Summary and ask your audience to give you what you asked for, such as a decision, approval to go to a next step, and so on. The closing is your final opportunity to make your magic. There is nothing more important than your attention-getting opening to capture your audience's attention during your presentation. However, it is your close that drives their action after your presentation has been completed. With this being what they remember, your closing should include a recap of your main points.

## Practice and Preparation

As I'm sure you already know, preparation is key. But preparation is more than the content of your presentation. You can have all the facts, details, and supporting data available, but if you don't deliver it properly, your message won't achieve the results you desire.

### Practice Makes Better

There are three ways to practice. The first way is to deliver your presentation in front of a mirror, ideally a full-length mirror. The second way is to find a captive audience, usually family, friends, or peers. The third way is to use video to record your presentation rehearsal. It's not that practice makes perfect. Rather practice makes permanent or better. Every time we do something, we improve . . . little by little.

### Using Non-verbal Communication

Your visuals, charts, and slides are part of your nonverbal communication. In other words, your visuals are a reflection of who you are. Clear visuals equal a clear you. The basic truth is a chart or slide needs to be readable if it is to be useful. There are a number of factors that contribute to readability: The first is the font that you choose to use.

Avoid script fonts or handwritten fonts or anything frilly. The second big point is the background color you choose. Naturally, there must be sufficient contrast between the font color and the background color. And, remember, many people—mostly men—are color-blind. Cluttered visuals communicate a cluttered you.

The fact is, 75 percent of everything we know today, we learned visually. Studies show that 90 percent of all information that comes into our brains is visual. Our brains absorb images 60,000 times faster than words. Your slides are not your presentation. Your slides simply support you as the presenter.

### Minding Your APQs (Authentic Presence Qualities)

Can you spot a fake bill? Fake money sends you a lot of clues that the bills are not authentic. And the US treasury—as well as the treasuries of Canada, Mexico, and other countries—develops new and improved anticounterfeiting measures on an ongoing basis. When you examine a fake bill closely, it asks you questions that you can't answer. In that case, you know that it's a fake. But what about the inauthentic presenter, executive, teacher, or salesperson? Well, you can be very certain that your audience will spot all of the clues. And this is why you can't fake it to make it! Your audience can spot a phony a mile away.

These are the traits that separate average people from extraordinary people. Dr. Sharon Lamm-Hartman, the CEO of Inside-Out Learning, researched key qualities that, if demonstrated, contribute to the expression of authentic

presence. The basic qualities are warmth, thoughtfulness, openness, sincerity, integrity, clarity, passion, confidence, polish and presentation, inspiration, trustworthiness, and respect. If you've been counting, there are 12 of them. And they are all important. To improve your presentation skills, after rating yourself, ask three or more people to rate you to help you determine your Authentic Presence Qualities strengths and blind spots. Unless we know how others view us, we can't authentically choose whether we want to work on our growth and development.

A survey of 268 senior executives revealed "Executive Presence counts for at least 26 percent of what it takes to get promoted." The highest estimates are closer to 80–90 percent, with the remainder made up of your specific skill set. No matter which number you believe, authentic presence is still an important factor in how successful you will be as a leader and in your professional career. Think about it if you are competing for a job with someone who has similar accomplishments and skills; the only thing that will differentiate you is your leadership presence. In the end, the job will go to the most authentic person.



**Dr. Sharon Lamm-Hartman** has 20+ years of award-winning experience as CEO and founder of Inside-Out Learning, Inc. (IOL), a WBENC-certified global leadership, team and organization development consulting firm. IOL works with Fortune 500, mid- and small-size businesses to level up their professional and leadership development skills. With a doctorate in leadership and organization development from Columbia University and a masters from Cornell, she is a CEO, leadership development consultant, certified executive coach, speaker, writer, educator, wife, and mother.

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