

insideARM
Ask Amy: Leading with Authenticity During a Crisis
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Mike Bevel

All right. I think it is time for us to get started. Welcome, and thanks to all of you for attending this insideARM webinar, *Leading with Authenticity During a Crisis*, which is part of our new series, *Leading Strategically Through Recovery*. I'll introduce our two panelists to you, Amy Perkins of the iA Institute and insideARM, and Wendy Badger, an experienced chief compliance officer and ethics professional.

Amy Perkins is a collection and recoveries veteran with 20 years of collection and recovery experience. She has intentionally steered her career in a way that has gained her experience in all facets of the business: operations, strategy, risk, compliance. Over half of her career has been focused on strategy and pushing the envelope to modernize the collections approach and improve the customer experience. Amy is currently the President at insideARM, where she is focused on strategic long-term growth of the company through her leadership of the products and services provided now and in the future. She is also the creator and executive chair of the Women in Consumer and Commercial Finance in IA Strategy and Tech.

Wendy Badger is an experienced chief compliance officer, attorney, and ethics professional, with a focused history of building, restructuring, enhancing, and sustaining highly functioning compliance management systems and ethics programs. She is a strategic, passionate, and authentic leader, who is also a trusted business partner and mentor. She strives to elevate others' talents through courage, vulnerability, innovative problem solving, and integrity. She is an award-winning trainer and presenter, dedicated to making compliance and ethics training relevant, dynamic, and engaging. She is a certified corporate compliance and ethics professional in the society of corporate compliance and ethics, skilled in legal, regulatory, and corporate compliance, privacy, security, ethics in compliance investigations, risk management and litigation, policy and procedure management, quality assurance, and training and development.

Wendy holds a Bachelor's degree in political science from the University of St. Thomas and a Juris Doctorate from Mitchell Hamline College—I hope I said—it

would be embarrassing if I said Juris Doctorate incorrectly; let's hope I didn't—from Mitchell Hamline College of Law.

And, finally, hi. I'm Mike Bevel, Director of Education for the iA institute and a Safeway club card holder, and that is my experience. I've got some housekeeping I'd like to go over with you in the audience. The first, as I mentioned before, is there is a questions box. It's available to you to send any questions through. And that is our preferred way. Sometimes some of you—and I love you all—sometimes some of you send it through the chat, and it's great, but it's also not great, because it's a little more difficult to manage something that's a question from something that's just an "I can't hear you, Mike," or whatever that is. So, question box, please use it. This webinar will be up on insideARM's website later for re-watching.

And then the final bit of housekeeping I'm going to do is some legalese that I need to read you on the record. *This information shared in this webinar is not intended to be legal advice, but simply the informed opinions of our panel. It may not be used as legal advice. Legal advice must be tailored to the specific circumstances of each case. Every effort has been made to assure this information is up to date. It is not intended to be a full and exhaustive explanation of the law in any area. However, nor should it be used to replace the advice of your own legal counsel.*

So, rather than a traditional presentation with a slide deck—so please don't ask me if you can download the slide deck. You can't. There isn't one. If you really want one, I'll make you one. This is going to be a conversation about various challenges and solutions to explore while trying to lead during a time of crisis and confusion.

And with that, I'm going to turn things over to Amy to set the lay of the land and get us ready for the questions that we're all going to have with each other.

Amy Perkins

Thank you, Mike. That was a great intro. I appreciate it. Welcome, everybody, to today's webinar. As Mike mentioned, this is going to be casual conversation. There are some great questions he's going to ask us to help get to the root of this authenticity question. Authenticity is incredibly important to me personally, and we started talking about this webinar before a lot of these changes started coming, before COVID-19.

And I'll tell you, I briefly thought about, gosh, is now the right time? Wendy and I talked about it, and we thought, man, now authenticity is more important than ever. And a lot of our core characteristics are going to be tested and are going to come to

light if we try to lead people through these really stressful times while we're also going through them as well. So we said, let's carry on. But also, make sure that it's grounded in why our answers to these questions are relevant to you right now, especially relevant to you right now. So thanks again for joining us, and I say we should jump right in.

Mike Bevel

There we go. Thank you all for being really generous, especially with me, because I'm going to make six more mistakes before we are done seeing each other in this moment, so just bank them up.

This is for both of you. I'm going to start with Amy, and then I'll have Wendy answer. So how do you define authentic leadership? What does it mean to you personally?

Amy Perkins

Yeah. So I think for me, earlier in my career, I would look at leaders, and especially really senior leaders, and it would feel like a lot of them sounded the same. They approached a panel the same. They dressed similarly. And in many cases, at the more senior levels, I started to feel like, gosh, everyone sort of even talks the same. And that's fine, I think, in some cases. But authentic leadership to me means bringing both your unique personality and style and approach to things to the workplace, but also being candid and honest and open with people, and the fact that you go from being led to being a leader doesn't mean that you have to exchange your authenticity for that promotion that you're taking. And so, we'll talk a little bit more about how you do that and what that looks like, but to me, that's what it means.

So, Mike, you're on my team. You can probably attest to this. I'm really all about saying this is Amy. Here's who I am. Some aspects of my personality are I like to be casual. I like to get to know people if they want to share. I like to share information about me and be open. I feel like work relationships are about our human experience, and—first and foremost, and I think the more that we can dig into those human experiences and acknowledge that they exist, the better we can work together, and the more productive we are together as a team. So those are some examples of what it means to me and why authenticity is so important.

Mike Bevel

All right. Wendy, do you want to follow up?

Wendy Badger

Yeah, just briefly, because I agree with really everything that Amy said. The thing that I would add to it, and I don't want to jump ahead, because I think that we'll get to this point, too, but it's really about making sure that your words and actions match, for me. Similar to what Amy was talking about, when I was younger in my career and looking at the senior executives, and I would hear the words that they were saying, and then I would watch the things that they were doing, and they just did not align. They didn't match up. And then I would see who was getting promoted and why they were getting promoted, or even if not promoted, somehow rewarded or recognized. And it really didn't match with the things that they were saying.

And so, for me, a big piece of the authenticity, in addition to what Amy was talking about with the openness, the candor, the honesty, the integrity, it's also from my compliance world, does the paper match the practice? Are you saying the things that you're still doing and following up on? So when your actions meet what your words are saying. Because there are times when your actions speak so loudly, I can't hear what you're saying, and that's going to overshadow it. So to me it's the old saying that actions speak louder than words is really what that gets to in terms of the authenticity, that that matches up, and that's who you are no matter what situation you're in, and that's what you're bringing to the table. What you see is what you get kind of a thing.

Mike Bevel

I want you to keep talking a little bit more, because this leads up to the next question I was going to ask anyway, which is when you're thinking about that culture of authenticity, sort of making your actions match the loudness of your words—that made sense, right; that sounded like it made sense—what must companies do to promote that culture of authenticity? And why do you think it's so important now in a crisis? And what are the benefits of having that culture fostered within your organization?

Wendy Badger

I'm happy to start on this one, but I'd love to hear Amy's thoughts on this one, too. I think a big piece of it, for me, is when you're leading with authenticity is, like I said, your words match your actions. And so who you are, what you're doing, how you're doing it, what and who you're rewarding and promoting all match up with those values that you're espousing, whether that's integrity, honesty, candor, excellence, whatever that value may be for yourself or the company, that those things match up.

That's what can help, I think, build, to earn and build trust with employees, with coworkers, with business partners, with contractors, whomever it is that you're working with. They trust that you're holding true to those values, that you're admitting when you don't know something, and what comes next, I think, is even then more important. And that's when the true authentic leadership comes out. You know, I don't know, but I'm going to find out, but let me direct you to a resource. So the but, to me, matters. What comes next? Finding that resource, being open to feedback. Not just giving the feedback, but receiving it and taking that in. All of those things really, I think, help to earn and to build trust.

And in a time of crisis, that's when it really matters. When that rubber hits the road, if you've built that trust, folks are more likely to know that you are making decisions for the right reasons, for the betterment of the company, for the betterment of whether it's the organization or that you're putting the people first. Putting their health, safety, and wellbeing first matters. Those actions will show that and prove that. And if you're not an authentic leader, folks will not believe that you're doing that for the right reasons, or they will question your motives for doing it. But when you're more open and transparent about it, and you explain to them, here's what we're doing, and why, that helps to build that trust and show that true authenticity with all of your accountability partners. You've laid that groundwork. You've laid that foundation, so that in times of stress and crisis, folks are not only more willing to believe you, but they're willing to follow your lead and trust that you're going to take them in the right direction. Amy?

Amy Perkins

Yeah. I think that was all really so well covered, Wendy. But what I'll add is I'm such an advocate for diversity and inclusion in the workplace, and I think authenticity really means that we need to be original. We need to be who we are, and we need to show up as who we are. And I think for companies to really promote a culture of authenticity, they need to have a diverse workforce. And then they also need to encourage people to speak out and say when things aren't working and disagree with leaders when they don't agree with that path that things are going down.

And I think back to your point of words and actions aligning, I think if you promote your company as being diverse and inclusive, but then you work your way towards getting everyone to think the same and approach problems the same way, then you actually lose so much of what is the value of inclusion and diversity. And so, I think that's—an important aspect of it is that companies need to truly and

genuinely value differences in people value wise, personality wise, all of those things. Because here's what happens in a crisis when you don't.

What happens in a crisis is you're making a lot of decisions very, very quickly, and a lot of decisions that have major impact. If you've created a culture where people don't feel comfortable speaking up and disagreeing when they think that the company's not going in the direction right now that is most important, then you risk really losing the value or making the wrong decision, just because you've become a culture where what the leader says is what everyone needs to do, or you need to get on board. And that just takes everything from it. And so, to me, that's why, getting back to my point earlier about being authentic and being—and encouraging people to get to know one another is in times of crisis, you can say, hey, John, I recognize that you don't normally feel comfortable speaking up without time to think about this thing, but I value your opinion. I want you to go take some time and come back and tell me what you think of that. That is encouraging that person to embrace who they are, and then allowing them to do that.

The last thing I'll say is you can also create this environment where people are afraid to fail, if they don't feel like they have in their leader someone that they can trust and someone that says, hey, I know you're great at your job. And 99% of your decisions are going to be great. One percent of that may not be. People will take greater risks. They'll double down for you in a time of crisis if they know that speaking up or making a decision or taking a stand, the repercussions of that are going to be more about what did we learn from this than making an example of someone who made a bad decision during this time. So I think those are all things that are really important for companies to think about from a people perspective in general, but to think through the implications of not really promoting an authentic workforce.

Wendy Badger

Amy, there's one thing I want to really underscore that you said in terms of having that speak up culture and encouraging people to speak up, and if they see something, say something, or whatever the case may be, and be open with their ideas. I think that that is absolutely critical. And I think in an authentic workforce, an authentic leadership also requires listening. Because if you've got folks who are speaking up, but they never see any action, they never understand why a particular action was taken, somebody spoke up and said, hey, we should do this, and the company goes a complete 180 direction without explaining the why, it makes

people feel like they haven't been heard, and it doesn't matter if they speak up, because nobody's listening. And so I think that the two go hand in hand.

While I absolutely agree, you want to encourage the speaking up, not pointing fingers, and yeah, maybe you go back and figure out what went wrong and how could we do it differently by way of process improvement, not to—to your point, you're not pointing fingers to say you screwed up, and it's your fault.

Amy Perkins

Yeah. I think that's great, and I think the last thing I'll add on this point, because this question is so important, to build upon what you just said, Wendy, I think that in times of crisis, people want to trust their leaders. People want to know that if you know it, you're going to share it. If you can share it, you're going to share it. If you don't know, you're going to say you don't know. If you're nervous, too, even though none of us want to be nervous or afraid of what's happening, but I know if I come out and say, hey, listen, I'm nervous, too, but here is what we're going to do, and here is how we're going to approach this, and here is how we're going to fight this, people recognize that leaders are human, too.

And I think that there's a lot of camaraderie that comes with that, but then also they have faith in you that you are going to go all out for them and try to lessen the impact to them as much as humanly possible, and that's why, to me, it's one big circle. You've got to have that authenticity and trust to really have so much of the rest within a company. Okay, Mike, back to you.

Mike Bevel

That was fantastic. I think that conversation was really, really good. Amy, do you—how do I ask this? So do your personal values differ from your professional values? Is that a thing? And let's assume that they're the same, because I think authentic people probably would want that alignment. Do some take on a greater importance in a personal versus a professional context?

Amy Perkins

Yeah. So, for me, your point is right. I really value authenticity first and foremost, so I don't like to compromise my values, and they do align personally and professionally. Yeah, I will say there are values in my personal life that are tested in some ways and different values in the workforce that are tested in different ways.

So a few examples I would give of those, I really value bravery and candor and doing work that is meaningful, not just me, but the people that I lead. And so, let's take bravery or speaking up as an example. If I value being candid, but I'm in a room that's really intimidating, and I have to muster up the encourage to say I'm contributing here, and I'm going to communicate my point, because I value that, and I value expressing diversity of thought and those types of things, it's not so much valuing it meaning that I'm going to go in the exact opposite direction of a value to compromise it, but sometimes valuing things means standing up for yourself or standing up for that thing, and that takes a lot of courage. But if I don't do those things, it's not that I don't compromise the value. It's that I compromise the authenticity, which again, is so important to me.

And back to Wendy's point earlier about words and actions aligning, if there is a particular approach I want us to take, and my team and I have worked on that approach, and then I go into a room, and I'm representing them and their thoughts, and I don't demonstrate that candor or advocate for our position, I walk out feeling like I have compromised what I know to be important and valued and what is authentically my opinion. So that's where, I think, for me the value aspect comes in, since I do try to be as authentic of a leader as I can, really just trying not to compromise some of those in the workplace that become a little bit more challenged than others.

And I would say even meaningful work. I think the roles that I've had throughout my career are sort of an example of me trying to stay true to being in jobs that bring me satisfaction and bring me joy and fulfill the things in my life that I need at that point in time. And so, staying true to myself and being authentic means being very intentional about how I've navigated my career, so that I can move into progressive roles that don't require me to compromise what's important to me personally and professionally. That's one of the many reasons why I love insideARM. But I think that's an important aspect of things.

Mike Bevel

So, Wendy, for you, I guess a little bit of a similar question. Is Work Wendy and Home Wendy and Friend Wendy, is it the same Wendy? Or do you perform different aspects of Wendy depending on—I don't mean to—we're not going to talk about civil, but do you see any conflict with those three identities? Do they all blend together well? How does that work for you?

Wendy Badger

Well, first of all, let me just say I wanted to stand up and do a big hallelujah, amen when Amy was talking, because I am right there with you. But for me, this has really been a journey. So if you're playing your conference call bingo, you can probably go ahead and mark something that you're going to hear multiple times, because I think in a lot of ways a lot of the things we're going to talk about for me have been a journey.

I used to feel like I had to be all things to all people in all aspects of my life. And, frankly, being somebody different in all of those different roles that I play, whether it's Spouse Wendy, Daughter Wendy, sister, aunt, jazzercise instructor, professional, dog mom, whatever that role is that I'm playing, to be somebody different in all of those roles, frankly, is exhausting. And I say that not to sound flip about it, but because I've been there, and I've done it, and it's exhausting. And so, for me now, they are all the same. All of those different versions of Wendy are very much the same. Or maybe I should say very similar, because I find that the different settings that I'm in, or that different role that I'm playing, different aspects of my personality will manifest themselves more strongly or a little bit differently.

If I'm teaching a jazzercise class, some of my values and some of my personality is going to come out much more strongly than if I'm sitting in a conference call or having a one-on-one meeting with somebody who reports to me when I'm trying to give them some feedback. So different pieces are going to manifest more strongly, but all of those different versions of Wendy, all of those different parts of me still create the greater whole, and I'll rely on those different strengths differently. But it's not a different person showing up. And I think all of those people in the various aspects of my life would describe me very similarly and would also say that those small parts make up the greater whole, and they might see different parts more than others.

The other thing that I would say is that I've also found through all of those different versions that have created what I am today in my most authentic self, and I would say it's still a continuing journey, but I feel way less exhausted. I feel more my true self, and I'm sure Amy and I will talk about more what that kind of means. And I feel like I'm executing, and I'm delivering, and I'm showing up in each of those roles better than I ever have. And it's kind of like that old saying, and I'll end with this, that old saying where I think particularly for women, as you try and make sure everybody else's cup is full, your cup tends to drain itself and be empty.

But you'll find, I think, if you fill up your cup first, it tends to overflow, and then there's more to fill up other people's cups.

Mike Bevel

No, I think that's fantastic. Amy, did you want to add on to that?

Amy Perkins

I was just going to just add on that I think trying to conform to everybody's version of who you should be, it's not only exhausting, but it takes up an incredible amount of your mental space. I found that once I started saying, hey, guys, here's who I am, I want those of you who love it to come, and those of you who don't, I'm going to let you go, and that's okay. I'm not going to be hurt or take that personally, because that's just the way the world is. There are some people that I don't click with, and that's okay. It's not personal about them. It's just we don't mesh.

And so, once I let that go, my creativity in the workforce and at home maximized, my ability to be present and loving and there for my daughter in the ways that she needs became just less complicated, because with my friends, they weren't demanding things of me that were outside of who I really was, because that's who I made them think I was. And so, it just, your life just seems to flow a little bit easier. And, man, it's been really, really liberating.

Mike Bevel

So this is for both of you. Is being authentic—actually, before I ask this question, here's something that both of you have said in the last bit that I found really interesting to listen to. And I think one of the key—something especially for the Young Amy or the Young Wendy just starting out in their careers may not know or may not appreciate is some of the authenticity is going to come later, because you have to do—sort of that kind of honesty comes from experience and knowing what will work and what won't work, and learning also what authentic parts of you are appropriate for a situation, and what authentic parts of you are just, this is not the right room for that.

And I know for me personally, that took me embarrassingly longer than it probably should have for me to understand that I can't—not everybody's going to love Stream of Consciousness Mike in every situation. Anyway, so, to the question after that stream of consciousness. This is how irony works. If you are homeschooling your kids, if you get them around the computer right now, that counts as a credit in their [indiscernible 29:54] to graduation. Is being authentic something you

naturally do, do you think? Or has it been something that has grown as your career, confidence, and credibility has grown?

Amy Perkins

Yeah. So, Authentic Amy wants to get really ramped up and start using my hands now, because this is such a good question. And first of all, I love Stream of Consciousness Mike, for the record. Double thumbs up on that. But, yeah, when I look at who I was or the type of leader I was when I first started leading compared to the leader I am now, I'm a little embarrassed. I run into people that I managed early on in my career, and I genuinely say, gosh, I'm so sorry. Really, because you're so influenced, I think, when you're younger in your career, and you're still trying to figure out what you're good at, what you're not, what people think you're good at or not, or if you can actually climb the ladder. And you're competitive and intense, and not to say I'm not now, but I do it in a way that doesn't compromise who I am.

And back then, I would be like, these are the numbers, and this is what we have to hit, and this is what's going to happen. Amy now would be like, hey, let's sit down. Let's talk about your numbers. We absolutely have to achieve them. We have to achieve them consistently, and if we don't, we're going to have to talk about that, but let me help you figure out how to be successful. There's just an inherent difference, I think, in how I approach that now compared to how I approached that earlier in my career. And I think it's exactly what you said.

Part of it is I didn't know who Leader Amy was. It was like my first day on the job when I got promoted to be a manager for the first time. And you don't just wake up and know what kind of manager or leader you want to be, especially when you're young in your career and probably haven't even had that many great leaders to look at and to emulate and to pick and choose from to say whose style best aligns with who I am? And so, I think that's one aspect of it, and the other aspect is confidence. It's easy to conform to what everybody needs, or every boss you work for, it's easy to conform to their style and be liked and use that to your advantage. And it takes a lot more courage to say to your boss I disagree with you, or I respect you, but I think we need to go in this direction.

And every time I wouldn't speak up and contribute that way, I was taking value from the company, because that's what they had me in the chair for was to offer my unique opinion. So, yeah, I think it's something that has definitely grown, and it's still a challenge sometimes in certain audiences of people I don't know. I know how I could maybe approach them to have mass appeal, but I don't want to do that.

I really want to stay true to who I am. And for women who've been at the women's conference probably have noticed that my style's a little bit more casual. I like to talk to people in a big audience like they're my friends, because that's where I'm coming from in my heart. I don't want to be super, overly polished and hold myself in just a very specific way. I want to be Amy, and I want to connect with people as my true, genuine self.

But, again, I recognize that some people perceive that as, gosh, she really kind of lacks polish, or there's a whole number of things. But I think it's just a matter of where people are coming from, and for me, like I said, I'm okay now with some people saying I don't like her style. I don't take that personally, and I think that's where confidence plays a factor in it, too.

Mike Bevel

Wendy, would you add anything to that?

Wendy Badger

Not really. I say not really and then continue to talk, so yes, I would add a couple of things to that. But let me first say that I agree with everything Amy said. Sort of in my response to that last question about the different roles that we play in being the same Wendy and all of those roles, I would agree that this also has been a journey. Originally, being authentic didn't come naturally.

And to Amy's point, I do think that a large part of that is because I didn't know who I was. How did I—who was Wendy—what does that look like for Wendy to show up in these different roles? And now that I have more experience, I have more knowledge, I feel like I have more expertise—I even just qualified that. I feel like I have more expertise. No, I do. I've been doing this for a while. I do. So when I used to try to be all things to all people, and it just left me physically, mentally, emotionally exhausted. So when I'm true to myself, I think that that's when I know I'm being really authentic. And so, it didn't originally come naturally. It's much easier now to do it.

And whether it's because I just don't care what people think about me, or it's just that confidence level, but I think that one thing that has changed, and to Amy's point about the early versions of Wendy the leader, Wendy the manager, because I don't think those two things are synonymous. You can be a manager and not a leader and vice versa. But Today Wendy, Authentic Wendy would never ask somebody on her team, whether they are a direct report or just on a project team, I would never ask any of those people to do something for me or with me that I

wouldn't do myself. Whether that's working on a weekend on a special project or doing some testing or whatever the case may be, if I wasn't comfortable doing it myself, I'm not going to ask you to do it either.

And that comes with it, too, because when you're getting that pressure from above to say here's what you have to do, and get it done, and get it done quickly, the tendency used to be, well, someone on my team is going to get this done, and I don't care how they get it done. But when you're holding true to your authenticity and your own internal integrity and ethics, you're going to find a different way to do that. And if I'm not comfortable with it, I'm going to protect that team. I'm going to protect myself. And I'm going to push back. And I know Amy talked about feeling that comfort level to be able to push back. You have a seat at that table for a reason.

And I think the other way that it shows up now more than ever is when I'm in a meeting, and I don't have an answer. And they want to make an answer quickly. That's where I am going to speak up, and I'm going to say, you know what? I'm going to ask for the time and say I need more time to think this through, and then put a time frame around it. Give me two hours. Give me 20 minutes. Give me four days, so that they know I'm thinking about it, and I'm not just disengaged or uninterested or uninvolved.

Amy Perkins

And I'm going to jump in on this question. This is the last thing I'll say. I think, Wendy, you would probably agree with me on this, but what I have found I actually now, my authenticity above all of my other skills is probably my most valued quality by people or perceived to be one of my most valued traits in the workplace. And so, I'm so mad at myself for compromising that for so long. I mean, I'm not saying I was a big phony my whole career, but you guys know what I am. I mean, you start to just shed all of that stuff that isn't you, and then you arrive one day, and you say, oh, and then people say where have you been? I love you like this. And you're like, sorry. I thought I was doing it right, but now I've figured it out. So I think that's important, an important point to make.

Wendy Badger

Yeah. I think, Amy, when Mike was originally asking the question, what kept going through my mind was that you grow through what you go through. And I think that that's what you and I have said in a whole lot more words than that.

Amy Perkins

Yes.

Mike Bevel

Something that is occurring to me throughout this conversation, and you both talked about your teams, and it's a little uncomfortable, probably, and I don't mean to bum people out, but I think there are some agencies, certainly, and some companies that have had to lay people off, a large amount of people they may have had to lay off because of what's happening currently. You are going to recover, is our hope, certainly. And you're going to find yourself all of a sudden in this position of sort of orienting these new employees. And I think it's a shaky time, because there's going to be a lot of job opportunity, because a lot of places have had to lay people off.

So if you come off as phony, if you come off as inauthentic, if you come off as someone who is not a strong leader, especially in times of crisis, that's going to be really easy to spot by people. And you're going to be at a big disadvantage, I think. If a lot of what's being said by Wendy and Amy is sitting uncomfortably with you, or if it is sounding like something you're not able to do, I think it's something you should treat yourself to learning more about. All right.

Wendy Badger

Well, Mike, let me just follow up on that, because I think that you and I had kind of a side conversation a while ago about that, because I had made a comment that I think employers and folks who are in the position to be doing the hiring and firing or the laying off, I think they need to be prepared to answer questions when things do turn around, and we do start hiring people back. Answer the question what did you or your organization do for your employees, for your community? How did you handle this? Talking with people who have left the organization.

I've been in that uncomfortable seat where I've had to deliver the news to a team that used to be 41, and when I recently left, it was down to nine people, due to no fault of their own, just due to turn in business and change in direction and having to lay people off. And that's really an uncomfortable position to be in, so when you know the fall is all there is, how you fall matters. So how are we treating those people? What are we doing for our communities? How are we treating our employees? That's going to matter more and more, and I think that when folks are coming in for those interviews, when things turn around, those are the kinds of questions people are going to be asking.

Mike Bevel

A very good point. So, Wendy, I think you're going to—explain the difference, first, for me between what a mentor is and what a sponsor is, and then how those roles helped you and helped guide you through your personal and professional development.

Wendy Badger

Sure. So mentors and sponsors are, I think, two different things. So a mentor is someone who tucks you under their wing a little bit and teaches you the rules of the road, shows you the way, the path, and it could be an informal or a formal arrangement, where you're learning from that person both what to do as well as what not to do, and I've got plenty of examples of both. And sometimes they don't even realize that they're teaching you what to do or what not to do, but who—I don't know that anybody ever specifically told me when I go to a meeting, bring a pad and pen, bring something to write with, something to take notes. I don't know that anybody ever told me specifically to do that, but somehow I knew. So whether that was an informal mentor that I just watched and followed their lead kind of a thing is kind of a simple example.

Whereas a sponsor is something very different. A sponsor is someone who is going to lift as you rise. They're going to help you find those opportunities. They're going to challenge you and say, you know what? I think you would be really great in this kind of role. Let me introduce you to this person who can maybe give you some information, or who can tell you more about it, or challenge you to really put yourself to your highest and best use. So they're really two very different roles, I think, and can play a different role throughout different points in someone's career. Or maybe you need to start a blog, and you don't know how to do it, so you'll find someone who's really good at blogging, and you learn from them. And that's more of a point in time and a limited scope as opposed to throughout a career.

And I've had a lot of mentors, both formal and informal, in my career. I've not had very many, if any, sponsors. So I've had a lot of people who I've learned a lot of things from, but not someone who's really grabbed me by the arm and said here's what you're really great at, and here's where I see your career going, and let's figure out what you like and what you don't like, and how can we get you to that next level? So that's been a challenge.

And that's something that I think is really important for me now going forward is to be that that I didn't have when I was younger in my career. How can I help lift those other people and help them stand on my shoulders, and how can I help them

to move further in their career? So it's really important for me to reach back and pull people up along with me, because I didn't have that a lot when I was younger.

So I think that all of those, both mentors and sponsors, I think, are really critically important, but they play very different roles. And I think that those relationships also are better when they come organically, when they just are created because you really click and mesh with someone as opposed to reaching out and saying I want you to be my mentor. Well, why? Is it because they've got a job that you like or something that you aspire to? Because you admire something that they've done or some way that they lead or present? Or what is it about them that really is clicking for you, because that could help to form those relationships.

Mike Bevel

Amy, I wanted to ask you, and I'm also going to ask Wendy this as well, what do you consider to be your boldest or bravest authentic moment, and sort of what was the cost, and what was the reward?

Amy Perkins

That's a really good question. There was a time, probably I'd say about the middle of my career, where I was leading a group that the long-term plan for that group, back to what we were talking about earlier, was a little bit unknown. The popular answer would have been for me to go along with the notion of the most senior leaders to say we needed to dissolve the group. And had I had supported that and truly believed for the best interests of the business that that's what we needed to do, I would have made that tough decision. So it's not about avoiding difficult decisions. I mean, that's authentic, too, is saying, hey, I know this impacts people, but it's what needs to be done, and it's the right thing to do right now. So I think there's that.

But in this case, it was different. And I knew in particular that this leader did not like opposition. This leader was very much someone who wanted loyal soldiers who would go along with what he or she said. I'm trying to be—trying to leave some things open for interpretation here. So, anyhow, I worked with my team to put together what I thought was the compelling, factual, mathematical reason, all kind of politics and emotion aside, and went head to head with this person. And everybody thought I was crazy, and everyone said, wow, this is a career-ending move. Just say you'll go along with it. Why won't you just say you'll go along with it?

And the long and short of it is that group survived and thrived and ended up being an even greater contributor to the overall bottom line than they were before. And so, I knew, though, that fighting for what I felt like was the right thing to do in that case could have cost me big time. It just didn't work out that way that time. It worked out in my favor. But that was probably the time I really had to muster up the most courage to go against the grain, to be and do what I felt like was the right thing to do.

Wendy Badger

Amy, I think that's a really great example of leading with courage and being your authentic self and doing what was right, even if it meant that it might have detrimental impact to you. And it goes back to that speak up, listen up culture that you mentioned earlier, too. And I think that oftentimes what we hear in meetings is when that top dog starts talking, like you were saying, most people just nod and go along. I think when that top dog starts talking, people stop thinking. Well, the decision's already been made. It doesn't do any good. And I think your example is a really great one to show that that shouldn't be the case, and that the leader, that top dog, if you will, needs to take a moment and recognize that if they speak their opinion, all other opinions are going to stop, because they think the decision's already made.

Amy Perkins

Yeah.

Mike Bevel

Very good point. If there are any questions, I'd love to see them in the question box. But maybe what I will do right now is—oh, I'm going to read a comment out loud. Just wanted to say that I liked the amplification of each other—sorry, English is my first language, and I don't speak it well. Just wanted to say that I like the amplification of each other, you all doing this webinar. Example, I like what you said with this, Wendy, about x, or I want to add to your great point, Amy. Very cool. Trying to be better at that myself.

Amy Perkins

That's awesome.

Wendy Badger

That is. That is really great. And I think that we are all trying to do better at that, and one way that I've found is that to help myself with that exact issue, because I used to have that problem a lot, is I hate it when other people try and take credit for

other people's work. So that's how I started was to say, well, thanks for underscoring my point that I made earlier, and things like that. But it also, it made me a better listener when I started thinking about, oh, wait a minute. She made that point, and I've got a follow-up, so that's going to help remind me. And so that follow-up and that—because now I'm listening to understand what you're saying, not just to respond to what you're saying. So, Brittany, thank you for that comment. I think we could all do better about that. And I think it all comes down to listening.

Mike Bevel

I think the other thing, we touched on this briefly yesterday when the three of us were talking about what kind of questions we were going to do. And I think that, not to get too *Men Are from Mars, Women Are from Venus*, which is a terrible book, and don't read it. It's bad for human beings. But I don't know that men think about or value the concept of idea building as much as I've seen women do it. I think men will just—I don't know that a man would acknowledge another man or another woman all of the time with, oh, yeah, that was a great point. Let me add to that. They would just make their brilliant point, as they have done for a while.

Amy Perkins

Fair point. And I know we did talk a little bit about, and I know this is an unpopular slant on things, but I think, Mike, you asked, hey, do you think men think about being authentic in the same way as women do? And is it a similar struggle? And I think it depends on who the person is and what they value. I can only speak for women and say that while I'm not an expert in the field of women's studies, the women's conference and the work I've done there, raising my daughter and also trying to evolve as a woman in our society myself, I can say for me, a contributing factor of me not being as authentic as you could have in the beginning was that I had to sort of unbecome all of these things that I have sort of been conditioned to believe were traits or qualities that are inherently, in my case, feminine qualities, and that they may work against me in the workplace.

And so, once I was able to unwind a lot of that, which was part of my journey to becoming more authentic, then I could say, hey, you know what? I can be Amy, and I can be kind and compassionate and value humans first and getting the business done at the same time and still be wildly successful. I don't have to be the formula let's get right to the discussion. I don't want to hear about what's hap—you know. I didn't have to pick and choose. I could just be me and do that, but it did take some unbecoming for me and some unlearning, forgetting, dropping some of the things that I think I had come to think I had needed to do.

Mike Bevel

So I think the way we can end this nicely, Wendy, why don't you start, and just sort of suggest what are some things you wish you could have—if you could visit Young Amy—not Young Amy—Young Wendy—

Wendy Badger

I would love to visit Young Amy. I think we'd be fast friends.

Amy Perkins

I think we would, too.

Mike Bevel

But what advice would today's Wendy give to just-starting-out-in-her-career Wendy?

Wendy Badger

So I like that version of the question better, which is what advice would you give to just-starting-out-in-her-career Wendy as opposed to Young Wendy, because it suggests that I am no longer young. A lot of it sounds cliché, I think, to me, but it has so much more meaning, and I think part of just getting that experience, you start to understand why cliché's are clichés, right? But I think that a couple of different things that I would tell my younger self, and that I continue to tell myself and hope that my future self is listening as well is, first, ask for forgiveness, not permission, because you'll go further faster. And, Mike, you and I talked about this earlier today. Never allow someone to tell you no who doesn't also have the power to say yes. Don't let them control what you do or what you can't do.

One of the other things, that this just came to me, too, because of one other things, completely unrelated, Mike, that you and I were talking about, is ask yourself why not me instead of why me? Not asking, well, why do I have—well, why not me? I'm qualified to do this. I don't need your permission to do this. Why not me? Why shouldn't I do a video on leadership or maintaining mental health? And I think bigger than that, two things primarily, because I definitely want to hear Amy's answer to this question as well. One is that no is a complete sentence. You can stop there. You don't need a reason. You can just say no, no thank you.

Another thing that I have been told, and that I'm trying to appreciate more is that my humility will hold me back, and I think Amy suffers from this as well, for our myriad reasons, but because I don't like to toot my own horn. I don't like to talk

about my accomplishments. When Mike was giving our bios, I wanted to so badly to just do, stop talking. Just here's Wendy. She used to be—you know. But that can hold me back in a lot of ways, because I don't take credit for what I have done. I want to give credit for the team as opposed to taking the credit for something that I have done, even if I had help. They are not mutually exclusive things. I can do both.

And the final point I want to make is, and what I would for sure tell my younger self, grab her by the shoulders and just shake her until I got it into her, is to speak up. Find your voice and speak up. Ask lots and lots of questions. If you don't understand something, ask how to read a financial statement, for goodness sakes. Just ask those questions. If you don't understand an acronym that somebody used, ask the question. Chances are you're not alone. And speaking your mind. Speak your fears. Even if your voice is shaking, speak up. Even if it's asking for more time to think about something or to contemplate something. Make sure you're speaking up. When you have a seat at the table, speak up. You're there for a reason. Why are you there? Know why you're there. If you don't know why you're there, ask. That will help you to be able to speak up and know what role you should be filling when you're there. Am I here because I'm the chief compliance officer, or because I'm the chief ethics officer, or both? That will help what void are you trying to fill there.

Speak up. If you want an opportunity, ask for it. Maybe somebody doesn't know that you want that learning opportunity or to participate in a particular project. Or ask for a seat at that table. You're there, and folks are expecting you to speak up. And I think that that's maybe the biggest takeaway. And it can also help with your confidence when folks tell you why you are there. Because you're smart. Because you know a lot about the TCPA. Because you know whatever the case may be. It'll help to build you that confidence. And if the answer is no, we don't know why you're here, well then, you don't need to be there. Maybe there's somebody else who can fill that role. So, yeah, so speak up, I think, is what I would tell that early version of me. Amy, what about you?

Amy Perkins

Yeah. I'll just quickly say, I think, for me, I'd be like, hey, Amy Perkins, you're capable. People are tapping you for roles and talking to you about future opportunities because they respect and value you. And you need to believe it as much as they believe it. You know, my saving grace, quite honestly, when I lacked confidence earlier in my career, one was mentors and sponsors who saw my

potential down the road, who believed in me and gave me opportunities, or I earned those opportunities, and they helped open those doors for me.

But the other thing was, I was a tad bit braver than I was confident, if that makes sense. So I might say, hmm, I don't know if I can do that, but okay, let's do it. But I did that to a point. I do think that there were opportunities that came my way throughout my career that I looked at and I declined, or I didn't go after because I wasn't really sure if I had every single qualification on the required or optional skills level. I think I would tell Amy what you don't know, you'll figure out, because you're resourceful, and you're determined, and you're tenacious, and you should go for it. And that's probably where I would end it for me.

Wendy Badger

Amy, one of the things, though, I just want to bring this up, because you talked about, in one of our pre-conference calls, one of the things you talked about that I would love to tell my younger self, too, is you talked about advocating for yourself. And if you could touch on that, because you had some really great things, and I didn't take enough notes then, and I want to do it now.

Amy Perkins

Okay. Well, thank you. Yeah. It's hard to be—I'm a pretty humble person. I don't like someone to be on a call and say Amy did something that Amy actually didn't do. Because that doesn't feel authentic to me and genuine. And so, in many times in my career, I didn't take credit for things I should have taken credit for. I was really good with my direct manager. I knew what my goals were. I knew what my tasks were. I kept meticulous tracking. I proactively talked to my manager about my progress against my goals and objectives, short-term, long-term, career. I mean, I was all over that with my manager. But I didn't necessarily do a good job of that more broadly early in my career.

And then I became more strategic about it and thought, gosh, who else is in the room when they talk about Amy, and do those people know me? And I need to make the effort to go to those people and say, hey, I'm Amy Perkins, this is my role. This is what I'm really great at. If you want help in those areas, I'll help you. I just didn't really do a good job earlier on in making that happen. I thought, you know, if I put my head down and work hard, people are going to notice. In a lot of cases, that did happen, but I think it could have happened more quickly and maybe even at a higher level than what it did had I have done more of that for myself.

Wendy Badger

Yeah, so advocating for yourself not just with your direct boss, but beyond.

Amy Perkins

More broadly, yeah, because a lot of people, it's a collective team of people, usually, that are making a decision about your career and future opportunities, not just your boss. If you just go to your boss and advocate for yourself, then you're really at the mercy of how well your boss does at articulating their advocacy for you, and that can go either way.

Wendy Badger

Yeah. You're putting your trust in them that they're your biggest cheerleader, and they might not be.

Amy Perkins

Or they may be, but they're not a very effective at communicating that to people. There are many reasons why that could stop with them. So, yeah, take it into your own hands and advocate for yourself across the board. I think that's it.

Mike Bevel

I think we can call it an afternoon, everyone. So first off, I really want to thank my panel, Amy Perkins, who I work with and adore, and Wendy Badger, who I work with often and also adore. So this was a real pleasure for me to get to hang out with them and listen to them talk, I think, really intelligently about what it is to be an authentic leader and just the importance of that and how important it's going to be going forward.

And then the other people I want to thank are you all who are watching this, because it means a lot that you took time out of your day to spend an hour with us. We hope you found it valuable. If you have questions about the content in today's presentation, you can send those to Amy@insideARM.com, and she will be glad to either answer it, or get it to where it can get answered, or I don't know. I'm not her boss. She's mine. So what she does with her email is what she does, and that's—

Amy Perkins

I'll get back to you. Hit me up.

Mike Bevel

If you have suggestions for other topics in a webinar series like this, you can also send those to Amy at, and if you're interested in topics about the industry in

general and would love to see a presentation from experts, go ahead and email editor@insideARM.com, and we'll get started on that as well. Otherwise, we can say goodbye to each other, and I hope to see you all again soon. Good-bye.