

Being superhuman means keeping it real

Value is a measure of worth and oftentimes has nothing to do with cost; it pertains to trust and faith

“IF WE’VE learned anything from this pandemic, it’s that we’ve had to shed our professional armour and get real,” said I in *The Globe and Mail* on Oct. 23. My statement was true then and remains so now. That’s because nothing is more important than being your true self to yourself and to those with whom you work, casting aside detritus and nonsense that no longer works and perhaps never did.

In his office at Imperial Oil’s former headquarters in Toronto, my father had a piece of heavy pipe — L-shaped, about 10 inches in diameter and weighing 80 pounds — that, reportedly, had been part of the TransCanada pipeline. It was positioned as an upside-down L with the long part, which was two feet in length, appearing to go into the floor and the short part, about a foot long, into a wall. A handle at the elbow could be lifted, turned and dropped, landing with a satisfying clang. This contraption was within easy reach of his desk and did nothing — or so I thought until I asked him what it was. He replied, “It’s my bullshit extractor.”

After he died, his “bullshit extractor” held pride of place in every office I occupied for years. The number of times that I muttered “bullshit” and lifted, turned and dropped the extractor’s handle are countless. Whenever I “flushed,” I’d laugh and feel immensely better.

Keeping it real

I don’t know about you, but I’ve seen, heard and experienced less BS during the pandemic than in, well, forever. Perhaps this is because coping with uncertainty is enabling many of us to shed facades and be our authentic selves.

Being real is manifesting itself in how law

firms, legal companies and lawyers behave in markets key to their expertise, experience, strengths and interests. While the bottom line remains important, personal fulfillment in professional life is playing a more prominent role.

In many cases, being real is resulting in the replacement of swagger and strut with humility and sensitivity. This doesn’t mean appearing on Zoom looking like you’ve

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just washed the car. Instead, it signals the annexing of verbosity and eliminating over-embellishment, from personal behaviour to marketing fluff and puffery. No one was ever impressed by it or believed it anyway.

Superhuman traits

Being human means that we’re not perfect, and perhaps it’s our imperfections that make us interesting, attractive and approachable. If so, that’s a blessing, and it may answer why authenticity and character are so very important.

Our unique streaks are the essence of our personal brand. Everyone has a personal brand, which is who you are at your core. The ability to be your unique self and comfortable in your own skin, along with having the fortitude to consistently be who you are at the best of times and, most importantly, the worst of times, helps others invest their confidence in you as a person.

Being superhuman means being true to your own values, having belief in your own perspectives and insights, listening with open ears, heart and mind, sharing stories that move others and offering constructive ideas and actions. It also means being consistent and intentional about choosing pursuits that matter to you and for which you are best suited.

Trust, faith and rapport

Last year, due to the pandemic, many firms cranked out client communications like sausages, delivering double what they usually produce in a year. Tellingly, the number of Requests for Proposals was roughly twice the usual volume.

That’s because clients were shopping around and will continue to do so. They are seeking value for money. Value is a measure of worth and oftentimes has nothing to do with cost. Instead, it pertains to trust and

faith. Most often, it’s about treasuring the characteristics of being superhuman.

Many years ago, a top-notch boutique client firm of mine was the most expensive in the country. Still, many of its clients said they’d never leave because everyone they encountered at the firm — from receptionists and couriers to lawyers and their assistants — were nice. In addition to being highly regarded for expertise, clients found that being nice was a measure of worth and value for money.

There’s an old adage that people like to work with people they like. If ever there’s a time to capitalize on this by being superhuman, it’s now. **CL**

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