

Spring 5-10-2019

# Perceived Supervisor Accessibility and its Effects on Authentic Leadership

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Perceived Supervisor Accessibility and its Effects on Authentic Leadership

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A THESIS

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT FOR THE REQUIREMENTS

FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS IN

LEADERSHIP STUDIES

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MAINE

BY

KASEY GALLANT

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2019

FINAL APPROVAL FORM

THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MAINE  
MASTER IN ORGANIZATION AND LEADERSHIP STUDIES

May 3, 2019

We hereby recommend that the thesis of Kasey Gallant entitled *Perceived Supervisor Accessibility and its Effects on Authentic Leadership* be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Leadership Studies.

\_\_\_\_\_ Thesis Advisor (signature)

\_\_\_\_\_ Second Reader (signature)

Accepted

\_\_\_\_\_ Director (signature)

### Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my Faculty Advisor Dr. Elizabeth Goryunova for her support throughout the research process. I would also like to thank the following people for their professional support during this process; Jennifer McNulty, Stacy Cloutier, Patty Ames, and Andy Mayo, who without their help I would not have been successful in my academic goals. And lastly, I would like to thank my Mother, Mary Gallant and my brother Jacob Gallant, who routinely babysit my dog while I am busy doing school work.

I would like to dedicate this thesis to both my Father, Marc J. Gallant, and my first real leader, Betty Paquet, both of whom passed away over the course of the research process.

### Abstract

As technology develops, professionals will have a greater opportunity to work remotely; often using multiple modes of technology to attend meetings, workshops and communicate with colleagues and superiors. The present study explores leader accessibility as it is experienced by remotely located employees verses on-site employees, in relation to their direct supervisor's perceived Authentic leadership. The research at hand bridges a gap in the prior research on Authentic Leadership, which until now has failed to explore accessibility as a variable in the leadership experience. Data is sourced from a Maine-based retailer via survey method among two departments; Distribution, with predominantly onsite employees and leadership, and Facilities, with a relatively centralized leadership team, and remote employees located across several buildings and shifts. Though it is crucial to note that both departments contain onsite and remote employees, as well as onsite and remote leaders. The survey compares the departments on several key variables through the internally validated by Walumba et. al (2008) Authentic Leadership Questionnaire, which measures; transparency, moral and ethics, balanced processing, self-awareness. For the present study, four questions relating to supervisor accessibility were added. Though results were similar in nature for both departments, when data within departments is split between onsite and remote employees, remote employees ranked their leader as more authentic, despite interacting less frequently in person, and more frequently via electronic means. This important finding suggests that for a leader to relate better to their employees, it is crucial to implement multiple modes of communication in addition to the traditional face-to-face interactions.

*Keywords:* authentic leadership, accessibility, proximity, remote, on-site

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## **Chapter One: Introduction**

As many industries begin to embrace the technology that allows for efficient and instant communication among colleagues and supervisors, little has been noted on the effects of working remotely, and whether a particular leadership style is more conducive to digital communication. Thus, the objective of the present research builds on Avolio's work surrounding Authentic Leadership (Avolio et al., 2009; Luthans & Avolio, 2003) and examines whether there is a significant relationship between Authentic Leadership in relation to the proximity to an employee's direct supervisor's office, and whether perceived accessibility is a key component to Authentic Leadership. Participants are sourced from two departments of a mid-sized Maine-based retailer; one predominantly on-site department, Distribution, whose leaders have offices located on the premises, and thusly interact in person, and a remote department, Facilities, whose leaders are positioned throughout the company with employees stationed across multiple buildings and shifts. As such, in the Facilities department the vast majority of the remote communication is via digital methods including; phone calls, pages, email and instant messaging. Though it is important to note that both departments have onsite and remote personnel and leadership.

Prior to the present study, research on Authentic Leadership has failed to explore the effects of supervisor proximity and perceived accessibility. With the present research, Authentic Leadership is explored via survey method (Creswell & Creswell, 2018), and subsequently used to investigate several key variables: physical location in relation to direct supervisor, frequency of interactions with direct supervisor, and the perceived accessibility of the direct supervisor. Using the resulting data, the researcher explores whether proximity and perceived accessibility to a direct supervisor is a significant variable in perception of Authentic Leadership on remote and

on-site employees, and how the resulting data can be used to create a work place that is more apt to experiencing and implementing Authentic Leadership as a leadership style.

### **Purpose**

The purpose of the study is to explore whether proximity and perceived accessibility has a significant relationship to perceived Authentic Leadership when controlling for the location of employees to their supervisor's office at a mid-sized Maine retailer. Authentic Leadership is defined as the "process that draws from both positive psychological capacities and a highly developed organizational context, which results in both greater self-awareness and self-regulated positive behaviors on the part of leaders and associates, fostering self-development" (Luthans and Avolio 2003, p. 243). Proximity is determined by whether an employee's home base is located in the same building as their direct supervisor's office or remote office. Lastly, Accessibility is measured by the perceived timeliness when addressing employee needs and the ability to get in contact via electronic means as well as face-to-face interactions. These two variables; proximity and accessibility, are used to explore Authentic Leadership in a workplace that utilizes both onsite and remote leadership.

### **Research Questions and Hypotheses**

The study at hand begins bridging gaps in research and primarily addresses how employee proximity and interactions affect the employee work experience. As such, furthers the research on Authentic Leadership through the exploration of one central question and two sub questions:

1. *Central Research Question:* How does leadership proximity and perceived leadership accessibility affect the perception of Authentic Leadership in remote verses on-site employees at a Maine-based mid-size retailer?

2. Does the number and quality of Employee and Supervisor interactions positively affect an employees' perceptions of their direct supervisor? And might the proximity of work location have an impact on this relationship?

### **Definitions**

*Authentic Leadership*: “Process that draws from both positive psychological capacities and a highly developed organizational context, which results in both greater self-awareness and self-regulated positive behaviors on the part of leaders and associates, fostering self-development” (Luthans and Avolio 2003, p. 243).

*Accessibility*: For this study, accessibility will be defined as the possibility of communication either thought face-to-face communication or electronic communication. This measure is independent of the frequency of interactions and is rooted in participant perception rather than a quantifiable measure.

*Proximity*: Proximity is defined as the physical locational differences between employees and their direct supervisor. For this study, to be considered in close proximity both employee and direct supervisor must have a work station or be based out of the same building.

### **The Significance of the Study**

As the digital landscape continues to evolve and become more predominant across cultures, it is important to analyze how technology is integrated into the workplace, and especially how digital communications can be harnessed within leadership styles to create better working environments. Additionally, the future of the workplace is increasingly remote and thusly will need to be built around leveraging digital technology for the rapid transfer of information and ideas. As the workplace evolves with technology, leadership styles will also need to adapt to remain relevant. As such, this study provides a foundation for future studies that

explore face-to-face interactions in comparison to digital interactions, and whether accessibility, as opposed to proximity, is a significant variable in the future of professional interactions.

## **Chapter Two: Literature Review**

### **Introduction**

This chapter offers a look at the existing research that has been conducted on Authentic Leadership in relation to an employee's work experience. Further included is an analysis of existing research that supports a statistically significant relationship between several key factors of a positive work environment including; employee turnover, employee engagement, job satisfaction as affected by supervisor usage of Authentic Leadership. This current research study provides a foundation to the relation of an employee's proximity to their direct supervisor and perceived supervisor accessibility. Thusly begins to academically define the relation between the quality and frequency of interpersonal interactions, either through face-to-face interactions or virtual communication in relation to a leader's perceived Authentic Leadership.

Leadership can be paramount to an employee's work experience, to the point that it has long been anecdotally noted that employees quit bosses, not jobs. Employee turnover can be a significant issue in a professional setting as replacing employees is time consuming, costly, and a drain on company resources. Mello (2011) found that the financial cost of replacing an employee totals between 150 and 250 percent of the employee's annual salary. The rate of employee turnover has been found to be directly linked to higher employee recruitment and training costs, low levels of employee morale, job satisfaction, and the external perception of a lower quality of service (Gray et al., 2000). Additionally, the rate of retention is associated with the effectiveness of leadership (Abbasi & Hollman, 2000; Mossholder et al., 2005). To reduce the monetary and social costs of turnover it is important to retain effective and efficient employees all the while inspiring mediocre employees to produce higher quality work. One

technique that has been verified through research to improve the employee experience is a leadership technique known as Authentic Leadership (Luthans & Avolio, 2003; Walumbwa et al., 2008; Avolio, Walumbwa & Weber, 2009).

### **Authentic Leadership**

Luthans and Avolio (2003, p. 243) define Authentic Leadership as the “process that draws from both positive psychological capacities and a highly developed organizational context, which results in both greater self-awareness and self-regulated positive behaviors on the part of leaders and associates, fostering self-development.” Avolio, Walumbwa & Weber (2009, p. 424) later built on that definition adding that authentic leaders exhibit “a pattern of transparent and ethical leader behavior that encourages openness in sharing information needed to make decisions while accepting input from those who follow.” As such, practicing Authentic Leadership is one of the proven ways to mitigate the high costs of employee turnover (Azanza et al. 2015), increase employee engagement (Xu and Thomas, 2010), and bolster job satisfaction (Walumbwa et al., 2008). In doing such, leaders help to foster a positive and productive work atmosphere for their employees.

Authentic Leadership is a distinct subsection of leadership. Thusly, Walumbwa et al. (2008) identified and validated four key components that describe its main attributes:

1. *Self-awareness*, or the understanding of personal strengths, weaknesses, and limitations and their effects on others.
2. *Balanced processing*, or the habit of analyzing relevant information prior to decision making.
3. *Relational transparency*, the open sharing of authentic self; thoughts and feelings.

4. *Internalized moral perspective*, or self-regulation directed by internalized values and morals.

Through self-regulation and awareness, leaders can establish a work atmosphere that is open to reflection and encourages authentic communication between leaders and their followers. Doing such allows employees to actively engage with their work environment and is linked to positive work experience.

### **Authentic Leadership in Relation to Turnover Intention**

It is well established that replacing employees is costly in both time and money (Mello, 2011). While not all turnover is premeditated or prearranged, Mobley et al. (1979) established the notion of deliberate and planned employee departure as an individual's behavioral intention to leave the organization. To reduce the energies spent replacing personnel, it is important for organizational leaders to retain their quality employees and limit the intent to vocationally separate. While turnover intention will never be completely mitigated, supervisor support has been positively linked to retention (Chen et al., 2008). For example, Strachota et al. (2003) found that employees who took a voluntary separation from their position reported being unhappy with management support and having concerns that stemmed from the lack of support. Using the Authentic Leadership Questionnaire (ALQ) developed by Walumbwa et al. (2008), Azanza et al. (2015) was able to confirm that a lack of Authentic Leadership was negatively, and significantly related to turnover intention. In regard to retaining quality employees, it is important for leadership to have an authentic relationship with their followers. In doing so, companies are able to save resources and time that can be invested elsewhere.

### **Authentic Leadership in Relation to Employee Engagement**

In addition to turnover intention, job satisfaction has been found to be affected by leader communication on multiple occasions. Specifically, Walumbwa et al. (2008) found a positive relationship between Authentic Leadership and job satisfaction. Substantiating these results, Wong and Laschinger (2012) were able to positively link job satisfaction and empowerment to Authentic Leadership. Their results further suggested that the more leaders are perceived as authentic, the more employees felt empowered in their workplace, increasing job satisfaction and performance.

### **Authentic Leadership in Relation to Job Satisfaction**

Further exploring the benefits of open communication among leaders and their employees, Authentic Leadership has been positively linked to worker engagement. Through transparency and self-awareness, Authentic Leadership reduces employee turnover intention through the establishment of employee work engagement (Azanza et al., 2015). Accordingly, employee engagement, as characterized by González-Romá et al., (2006) is expressed by employees as a high level of energy and strong sense of identification with one's work, and thus is an important factor in employee experience. Research by Azanza et al. (2015) further suggested that work engagement is also a key factor to employee retention and has been proven to have positive effects on an employee's job performance (Peterson et al., 2012).

While employee engagement has been proven to be linked to a more positive work atmosphere, the results also translate into financial gains. As such, Xu and Thomas (2011) noted that employee engagement has been associated with an increased return on assets alongside decreased costs, higher earning per employee, including higher performance and fewer quality errors, greater sales growth and lower costs of manufacturing, and lower absenteeism and reduced turnover (Banks, 2006; Harter et al., 2002; JRA, 2007; Salanova et al., 2005; Schaufeli

& Bakker, 2004; Towers Perrin, 2003). If used properly, the effects of Authentic Leadership can be used as a tool to leverage both human and financial potential which translate into both social and monetary gains.

### **Leadership Accessibility**

Though Authentic Leadership can be used to facilitate a positive work experience for followers, it is contingent on establishing positive relationships. The interpersonal dyadic relationships between a supervisor and a subordinate fall on a continuum between impersonal and very interpersonal (Miller, 1978). Though it should be noted that accessibility refers to the possibility of communication, rather than the frequency of interactions, research by Miller (1983), and supported by Dallinger (1987), maintained the notion that a lack of availability on the part of the supervisor can negatively impact the relationship development and lead to the follower to perceive interactions as impersonal. Conversely, subordinates who view their supervisor as accessible are more likely to view the dyadic relationship in a positive manner (Miller, 1978). Compounding the perception of an interpersonal relationship, research by Dallinger (1987) demonstrates that as leaders become more accessible, and the frequency of dyadic interactions increases, the more the follower reflects positively on their relationship, thus further increasing the interpersonal interactions.

Though it should be noted that if organizational culture dictates supervisor accessibility by subordinates, the likelihood of the perception of leaders as people rather than figureheads increases (Dallinger, 1987). Despite the compounding cultural characteristic of open access among employees, organizations can leverage the perceived accessibility to practice Authentic Leadership in the dyadic relationships between supervisors and subordinates. Through the principle of transitive property, being accessible as a supervisor can positively affect followers

job satisfaction, engagement, and negatively impact turnover intention. Thusly, perceived accessibility could be the key component to perceived Authentic Leadership in professional settings.

### **Conclusion**

In summation, Authentic Leadership is a proven leadership style that increases fulfillment in the workplace, through job satisfaction and engagement, both of which reduce employee intent to professionally separate. Though these factors are significant and proven to be affected by leadership style multiple times over, whether a supervisor's perceived leadership style, specifically Authentic Leadership, is affected by an employee's proximity to their supervisor has yet to be studied until now. Further, this study is the first to explore whether the effects of Authentic Leadership through digital communication, specifically in relation to the frequency of supervisor/employee interactions, is related to a leader being recognized as authentic by his or her followers. While one can hypothesize that the perception of leadership is based on the quality of the relationship, it has yet to be substantiated in relation to the perceived accessibility of the interaction between employee and supervisor. The intent of the present research is to begin bridging the gap in research by analyzing whether Authentic Leadership is an effective leadership style for remote employees when leaders are perceived as accessible to their employees.

### **Chapter Three: Methodology**

Significant strides have been made in recent times to differentiate between the leadership styles and the positive effects each offers to followers. Authentic Leadership, as one of the major leadership styles, continues to gain a deeper understanding in its effectiveness by way of academic research. Yet to be studied prior to the present research, is whether accessibility and

proximity of a direct supervisor affects whether he or she is perceived by their subordinates as an Authentic leader.

This quantitative study uses a survey designed to further divulge the boundaries of supervisor authenticity in the workplace. Creswell and Creswell (2018) suggests that surveys are a good medium to test for associations with variables among a population. In doing so, a survey is used to elucidate the relationship between supervisors and their followers through perceived leader accessibility when compared to employee proximity to their direct supervisor. Data collected on Authentic Leadership will be analyzed in comparison to perceived supervisor accessibility to determine whether frequency of interactions has either a positive or negative affect on the employee work experience.

### **Population**

In the present research, a paper survey was distributed to the hourly employees of two departments; one predominantly on-site, and the other predominantly remote at a mid-sized Maine retailer. And while the research sample includes representatives of both the Facilities and Distribution departments, and though the retailer has locations across the continental United States and abroad, all participants are based out of the centralized Maine offices and warehouses. From the Facilities department, 130 employees and nine supervisors were recruited. Of those, 74 employees completed surveys, a 56.92% return rate. Though four employee surveys did not meet the qualifiers of either 18 years of age and six months of continuous service. Seven Facilities supervisors returned surveys, 77.78% return rate, all met the qualifiers. From Distribution 197 employees and seven supervisors were recruited. 53 employees returned a completed survey, a 26.90% return rate, all met qualifiers. Additionally, 3 Distribution supervisor surveys were returned, 42.86% return rate. Again, all met the qualifiers.

The present study sources a significant percentage of Distribution and Facilities employees at mid-sized Maine-based companies as participants. As such, the present study elicits the employees of one of two major manufacturing, shipping and retail operations based out of the Southern portion state. Thusly, the surveyed population is a representative sample of Distribution and Facilities employees of mid-sized Maine based retailers.

### **Instrument Development**

For the present study, Authentic Leadership is examined through a 20-item questionnaire on a 5-point Likert scale, 0 (not at all) and 4 (frequently, if not always). The first sixteen questions are developed by Walumba et. al (2008) and is commonly known as The Authentic Leadership Questionnaire (ALQ). The ALQ can be accessed via the independent publisher of psychological assessments, Mindgarden with permission of the original developers. The original ALQ survey questions addresses four key variables: transparency, moral and ethical, balanced processing, and self-awareness. The present study expands on the original ALQ survey to include four additional and original questions designed to measure leadership's perceived accessibility as the main variable of the study.

### **Survey Format**

Through the present study, there are two variations of the survey used; Leader and Employee. The leader survey is designed to be a self-assessment, measuring the supervisor's perception of their practice of Authentic Leadership in conjunction with their perceived accessibility. Conversely, employees answered the same questions assessing their direct supervisor on their Authentic Leadership in relation to their perception of their supervisor's accessibility.

The survey is two-part. Part one is a collection of demographic information as well as targeted communication questions which explore the medium used for communication between supervisor and employee. Using the demographics of all participants, and data is only considered valid if the participant is at least 18 years of age, and at least six months of continuous service with the organization used to source participants. Further, participants were asked whether their home base resides in the same building as their direct supervisor. Conversely, supervisors are asked whether they have an office located in the same building as a majority of their direct reports. Subsequent data is analyzed in the Discussion section based on this key variable.

Demographically, four additional follow-up questions are targeted at the frequency and medium of communication between supervisors and their employees. This section asks employees and supervisors to approximate how often they communicate through four commonly used mediums; face-to-face interactions, over the phone, through email or the company instant messaging system, Skype, or through text message. Participants have six choices for each question, ranging from Daily to Less than once a month.

The demographics are followed by the second half of the survey, which consists of the traditional ALQ (Walumba et. al, 2008), supplemented with four additional follow-up questions that are targeted perceived accessibility to their supervisor.

### **Data Collection**

Paper surveys were distributed to two departments at the same company; a predominantly on-site department, Distribution and a predominantly remote department, Facilities. In the Distribution department 197 surveys were distributed to employees, and seven surveys to

leaders. 130 surveys were distributed to the remote Facilities department in addition to the distribution of nine surveys to leaders. Each survey packet included paper copies of three items;

1. A survey script introducing the researcher and outline the objective of the research, as well as the method of returning the survey upon completion.
2. A proper consent form outlining the benefits and possible risks as required by the University of Southern Maine's International Review Board.
3. The ALQ survey as described prior.

Participants returned their completed survey via intraoffice mail in a preaddressed envelope or via centrally located drop boxes.

#### **Chapter Four: Results**

From the remote Facilities department, 130 surveys were distributed to employees, of those, 70 employee surveys were returned with usable data, and 4 without usable data. Nine surveys were distributed to the leaders of the Facilities department, seven were returned, all with usable data. In the Distribution department, 198 employee surveys were distributed. Of those, 52 surveys were returned with usable data, one survey was returned without usable data. Of the eight surveys distributed to the Distribution leadership, two were returned with usable data, one was returned with only the first section completed. Data is displayed in department average in Table 1-4.

Table 1

Descriptive Averages	Interpersonal Interactions	Phone Call Interactions	Email or Skype Interactions	Text Message Interactions
Facilities Leadership	1.857	4.71	2.14	4.14
Facilities Personnel	2.157	3.83	2.76	3.41
Distribution Leadership	1.333	4.67	3.67	6.00

Distribution Personnel	2.214	5.96	4.17	5.78
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Legend

1 Daily	2 2 or 3 times a week	3 Once a week	4 Every other week	5 Once a month	6 Less than once a month
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Table 1 displays the perceived average number of communications between leaders and their personnel through four mediums broken down by department.

Table 2

Descriptive Averages	Interpersonal Interactions	Phone Call Interactions	Email or Skype Interactions	Text Message Interactions
Facilities Personnel, On-Site Leadership	1.84	3.64	2.68	3.34
Facilities Personnel, Off-Site Leader	2.65	4.00	2.78	3.41
Distribution Personnel On-Site Leadership	1.98	5.96	4.08	5.76
Distribution Personnel, Off-Site Leader	4.50	6.00	5.00	6.00

Legend

1 Daily	2 2 or 3 times a week	3 Once a week	4 Every other week	5 Once a month	6 Less than once a month
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Table 2 displays the perceived average number of communications between leaders and their personnel through four mediums. Averages by department are divided into two subsections; employees with on-site leadership, and employees with off-site leadership.

Table 3

Descriptive Averages	Transparency	Moral/Ethical	Balanced Processing	Self-Awareness	Accessibility
Facilities Leadership	3.26	3.36	3.05	2.82	3.71
Facilities Personnel	3.23	3.12	3.01	2.97	3.66
Distribution Leadership	2.90	3.38	1.67	3.00	2.63
Distribution Personnel	3.03	3.02	2.69	2.65	3.39

Table 3 displays the raw averages of the four key components of the ALQ, with the addition of the Accessibility category. Data is separated by department, and further divided into Leadership and Personnel.

Table 4

Descriptive Averages	Transparency	Moral/Ethical	Balanced Processing	Self-Awareness	Accessibility
Facilities Personnel Leader On-Site	3.18	3.18	2.96	2.95	3.73
Facilities Personnel Leader Off-Site	3.33	3.02	3.13	3.07	3.62
Distribution Personnel Leader On-Site	2.98	2.98	2.67	2.60	3.40
Distribution Personnel Leader Off-Site	3.55	3.42	2.94	3.19	3.31

Table 3 shows a break-down of data collected from the modified ALQ within the two departments between the on-site employees and the remote employees.

Figure 1

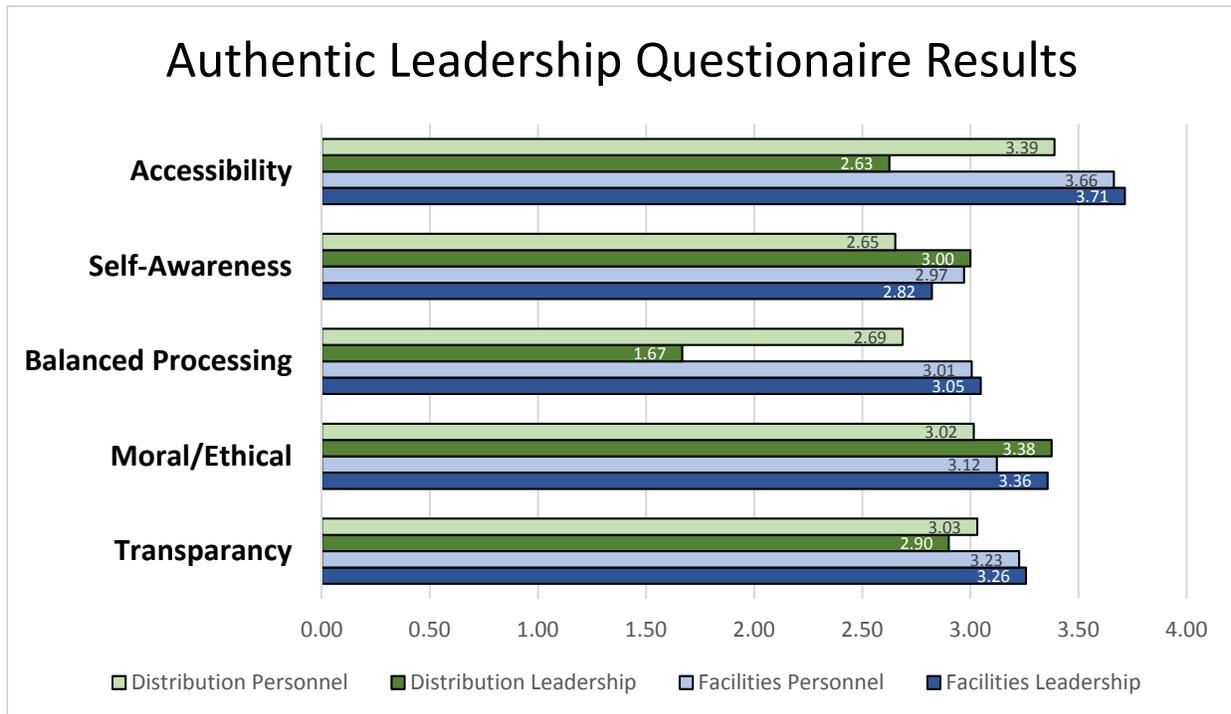


Figure 1 graphs the results sources from the modified ALQ between both departments and their employees. Data is broken down by employee answers and leadership answers.

**Figure 2**

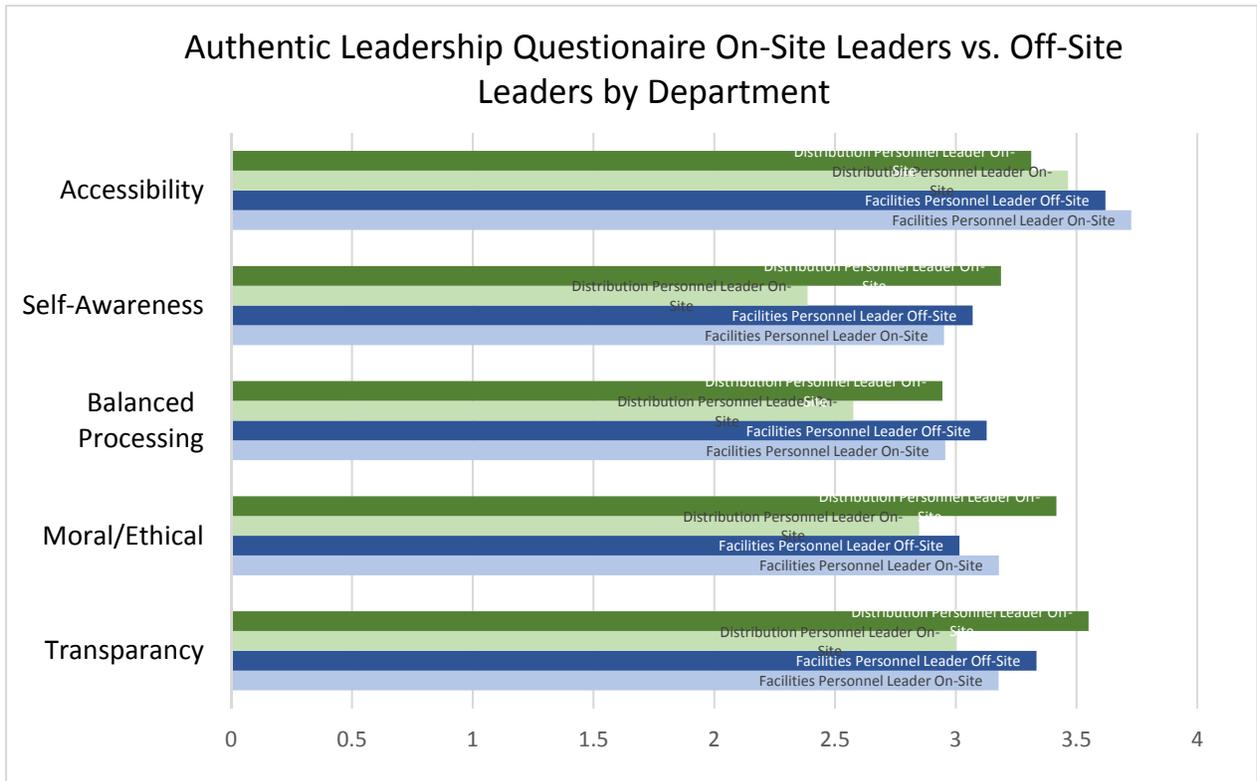


Figure 2 highlights the discrepancies between the department personnel, with the major distinction being whether the employees’ leader was located on-site or off-site.

**Chapter Five: Data Analysis**

Through the correlational data collected, several inferences can be made in regard to the perception of Authentic Leadership in the workplace, and how to harness accessibility as a variable to increase perceived authenticity. Looking at Table 1, the difference in reported interpersonal interactions between the Facilities department leadership and personnel is .3 points, while the difference in the Distribution leadership and personnel is .881 points. This data suggests that while Distribution leaders may physically encounter their employees more

frequently, their personnel classify their interactions as meaningful at a significantly lower rate than the Facilities personnel, whose leadership noted that face-to-face interactions are less common.

Looking at Table 1, let it be noted that there are significant differences in the data reported between the departments in communication over the remaining modes of communication, all of which were more frequent in the Facilities department; phone calls, 2.13 point difference, email and skype, 1.41 point difference, and text messaging, 2.37 point difference. It is interesting to note that a due to the spanning campus under responsibility of the Facilities department, a large portion of the Facilities employees have access to a company cell phone. As such, mobile communication among employees is not only encouraged, but necessary function of the department, that utilizes mobile technology to receive and complete assigned tasks.

Table 2 exemplifies the reliance on the mobile communications by the Facilities department. On average, the Facilities department utilized all forms of communication more frequently than the Distribution department. Data shows a negligible difference in the frequency in on-site leader and employee communication, however there are vast differences reported in usage of mobile communications. It can be surmised that this key difference is reflected in Table 3, which displays the raw data collected from the ALQ and graphed in Figure 1. Both of which display higher rankings by both leadership and personnel across the Facilities department.

The most striking data is displayed in Table 4, and graphed in Figure 2, which break down data by department and by on-site and off-site leadership. Despite reporting less frequent communications in both departments, off-site employees rated their leader nearly unanimously higher than on-site employees, with the exception of Facilities moral/ethical. These data points

suggest that employees think higher of their leaders the less they communicate. Suffice to say, it would be interesting to study the quality of the interactions and communications between off-site employees and their leaders in conjunction with the frequency. Though, this might also suggest that off-site leaders are more effective in their communications despite the frequency.

Overall, despite seeing their leadership less frequently in person, the Facilities department rated their leadership as more Authentic than the Distribution department. Employees and leaders in the Facilities department are more likely to use technology to communicate. This suggests that while communication may be less frequent for both on-site and off-site employees, the different modes of communication allowed for both parties to communicate in the method that feels most comfortable to them, as displayed in Table 1. While data is inconclusive on the root cause, this might be the key factor in the higher ratings on the ALQ across the Facilities department, which would that using multiple forms of communication is the key to being considered an Authentic Leader.

**Limitations:**

There are a few key limitations that should be noted when considering the data presented. First, and foremost, just prior to the dissemination of surveys in the Distribution department, one of the Distribution leaders passed away. Though data was not affected in terms of ranking the direct supervisor, as the leader had been on medical leave for a significant amount of time, the emotional toll of the passing may have been reflected in the entirety of the Distribution department's results.

Additionally, the survey was disseminated at a time of year when employees have a tendency to transfer departments or switch leaders. While leaders have been constant across departments, it is extremely likely some of the data collected was from employees who had

recently transferred leaders. Though the employees would have prior experience and relationships with their new direct supervisor, it is possible the employees would not have enough context to answer parts of the ALQ objectively.

Lastly, it is likely that the education levels affected the results. Service industries were used as participant pools, as such, a handful of surveys were returned with a note saying some of the questions were not understood, despite completing the questionnaire. Others noted that they did not have enough context for them to accurately rate their supervisor's behavior under certain circumstances, and left questions blank. It is likely that others did not note the lack of context but answered regardless.

#### **Future Research:**

Future research could advance the present research by delving into the modes of communication and how it relates to the perception of Authenticity. While the present study cannot conclusively link the increased technology to higher ALQ ratings, it would be interesting to investigate whether there has been a cultural shift with technology, and whether companies or leaders that have embraced technology are perceived as more Authentic in their leadership practices. Additionally, further research on the modes of communication may unlock the key to being perceived as a more Authentic leader, despite being on-site or off-site.

One key data point that presented itself through this research was the higher ALQ ratings for off-site leaders and employees. It would behoove the leadership field to delve further into why such data presented itself, and whether these findings were an anomaly or consistent across other companies and employee levels. Perhaps being off-site is only beneficial to entry-level employees, and that advantage dissipates higher up the corporate ladder. Perhaps off-site

employees have more quality interactions because they are off-site and interact less frequently across all communication modes.

### **Chapter Six: Conclusion**

Cultural shifts towards electronic communication have allowed people to develop preferences to the method of in which they exchange information. The smart phone has revolutionized how quickly communication is transferred and conditioned the American culture to various platforms for communication, with various formalities attached. It is no wonder that a department who is able to communicate via text messaging, a very informal method of communication, views their supervisors as more Authentic than a department that communicates via the more formal medium of work emails and face-to-face interactions. As such, results from this study suggest that Authentic Leadership can be increased by the means of multiple mediums of communication. Despite seeing their leadership in person more frequently than the remote department, the on-site personnel rated their leadership as less Authentic than the remote department. This suggests that while communication may be less frequent, the different modes of communication allowed for employees to communicate with their leader in the method that feels most comfortable to them.

In summation, this study suggests that utilizing several modes of communication within workplace translates into an increased likelihood an employee will perceive their leader as an Authentic leader. While technology is a tool that will increasingly be utilized from an efficiency stand-point, it can also be harnessed for a positive impact in the professional social atmosphere. Increasing the modes of communication can help leaders reach employs who have communication preferences that are tech based rather than face-to-face. Utilizing technology can eliminate the social anxiety that some employees encounter in supervisor/employee

interactions. By utilizing technology, which is now linked to higher Authentic Leadership ratings, it is rational to believe that increasing communication could also increase job satisfaction and employee engagement while decreasing turnover intention, resulting in lower costs associated with the hiring and training phases of employment. Electronic communication is the future, it is leadership's task to utilize it in a manner that benefits the workplace from a production stand point and a people stand point.

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## Appendix A



### NOTICE OF IRB REVIEW AND APPROVAL

**DATE:** December 06, 2018  
**TO:** Kasey Gallant, Leadership Studies  
 Elizabeth Goryunova, Leadership Studies  
**FROM:** Casey Webster, Human Protections Administrator, USM IRB  
**PROTOCOL TITLE:** Authentic Leadership and its Effects on Employee Turnover and Job Satisfaction in Relation to Supervisor Accessibility  
**FUNDING SOURCE:**  
**PROTOCOL NUMBER:** 18-09-1143  
**APPROVAL PERIOD:** Approval Date: December 06, 2018      Expiration Date: December 05, 2019

The project identified above has been reviewed by the University of Southern Maine's Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research using an expedited review procedure per Title 45 CFR Part 46.110. This approval is based on the assumption that the materials, including changes/clarifications that you submitted to the IRB contain a complete and accurate description of all the ways in which human subjects are involved in your research.

**This approval is given with the following terms:**

1. You are approved to conduct this research only during the period of approval cited above;
2. You will conduct the research according to the plans and protocol submitted;
3. You will immediately inform the Office of Research Integrity and Outreach (ORIO) of any injuries or adverse research events involving subjects;
4. You will immediately request approval from the IRB of any proposed changes in your research, and you will not initiate any changes until they have been reviewed and approved by the IRB;
5. You will only use the informed consent document that has the IRB approval dates marked in the footer;
6. You will give each research subject a copy of the informed consent document;
7. As applicable, you will comply with the University of Maine Information Security Policy and Standards and/or the Muskie School of Public Service Securing Protected Information Policies and Procedures and any other applicable USM policies or procedures;
8. If your research is anticipated to continue beyond the IRB approval dates, you must request continuing review at least 60 days prior to the IRB approval expiration date; and
9. You will close the project upon completion (or discontinued).

**This project has been granted a Waiver of Documentation of the Informed Consent Process for the following reason:**

1. The research presents no more than minimal risk of harm to subjects and involves no procedure for which written consent is normally required outside of the research context.

The University appreciates your efforts to conduct research in compliance with the federal regulations that have been established to ensure the protection of human subjects in research.

Sincerely,

Casey Webster

## Appendix B

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Kasey Gallant



To whom it may concern,

This letter is to grant permission for Kasey Gallant to use the following copyright material for his/her research:

Instrument: ***Authentic Leadership Questionnaire (ALQ)***

Authors: ***Bruce J. Avolio, William L. Gardner, and Fred O. Walumbwa***

Copyright: ***2007 by Bruce J. Avolio, William L. Gardner, and Fred O. Walumbwa***

Three sample items from this instrument may be reproduced for inclusion in a proposal, thesis, or dissertation.

The entire instrument may not be included or reproduced at any time in any published material.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "K. Gallant".

Mind Garden, Inc.  
[www.mindgarden.com](http://www.mindgarden.com)

**Appendix C**

## Survey Script

(read by the locations' supervisor or a 3<sup>rd</sup> party)

Kasey Gallant, a Supervisor in Building Support Services, is working on her Master's Degree at the University of Southern Maine. She is conducting a research study on Authentic Leadership with the intent of gaining more information on how often employees and their supervisors should interact in person.

Would you be willing to take 10 to 15 minutes to fill out the survey? Each survey is labeled with either a F or a D so they can be sorted by department, however, your responses will be anonymous; there is no way to know who filled out a survey. Feel free to skip any questions that you do not want to answer.

If you have questions about the survey, please feel free to contact Kasey at [kasey.gallant@maine.edu](mailto:kasey.gallant@maine.edu) or by phone at 207-232-9847. If you chose to participate, please take a survey packet and deposit your completed survey in the drop box located at [INSERT LOCATION]. Thank you in advance for your time.

**Appendix D****CONSENT FORM FOR RESEARCH PARTICIPATION**

**Study Title:** Authentic Leadership and its Effects on Employee Turnover and Job Satisfaction in Relation to Supervisor Accessibility

**Principal Investigator:** Kasey Gallant

I am a graduate student at the University of Southern Maine in the Leadership and Organizational program. I am conducting a research study, which I invite you to take part in. This form has important information about the reason for doing this study, what I will ask you to do if you decide to participate, and the way I plan to use the data obtained.

**The purpose:**

You are being asked to participate in a research study about Authentic Leadership.

The purpose of the study is to gauge whether proximity or accessibility of direct supervisors affect the perception of leadership. You are being asked to participate because you are employees who have working relationships with organizational leaders that we hope to study.

**What will I be asked to do if I choose to be in this study?**

You will be asked to complete this survey.

**Study time:** Study participation will take approximately 10 minutes.

**Study location:** All study procedures will take place at L.L. Bean.

**What are the possible risks or discomforts?**

To the best of our knowledge, the things you will be doing have no more risk of harm than you would experience in everyday life.

You may be uncomfortable with some of the questions. If you are uncomfortable, you are free to not answer or to skip to the next question.

**What are the possible benefits for me or others?**

There are no direct benefits to you.

**How will you protect the information you collect about me, and how will that information be shared?**

To minimize the risks to confidentiality, no personal or identifying information will be collected by the researcher.

**Are there any costs to participating?**

There will be no costs to you if you participate. You will not be paid for participating in this study.

**What are my rights as a research participant?**

Participation in this study is voluntary. You do not have to answer any question you do not want to answer. If at any time and for any reason, you would prefer not to participate in this study, please feel free not to. You may withdraw from this study at any time, and you will not be penalized in any way for deciding to stop participation.

**Who can I contact if I have questions or concerns about this research study?**

If you have questions, you are free to ask them now. If you have questions later, you may contact the researcher at [kasey.gallant@maine.edu](mailto:kasey.gallant@maine.edu) or (207) 232-9847.

If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in this research, you can contact the following office at the University of Southern Maine:

Office of Research Integrity and Outreach  
University of Southern Maine  
126 Bedford St  
Portland, Maine 04104  
Phone: (207) 780-4517  
Email: [usmorio@maine.edu](mailto:usmorio@maine.edu)

**Consent**

I have read this form and the research study has been explained to me. I have been given the opportunity to ask questions and my questions have been answered. If I have additional questions, I have been told whom to contact. I agree to participate in the research study described above and will receive a copy of this consent form.

By passing in this survey I consent for the Researcher to use my data.

## Appendix E

### Demographics

Instructions: Please circle the following answer that applies:

- |  |     |    |
|--|-----|----|
| I am at least 18 years of age:                                       | Yes | No |
| I have been employed at L.L. Bean for 6 continuous months or more:   | Yes | No |
| My direct supervisor has an office in the building I primarily work: | Yes | No |

Instructions: Please circle the option that best finishes the statement:

1. Typically, I talk to my direct supervisor in person:

Daily	2 or 3 times a week	Once a week	Every other week	Once a month	Less than once a month
-------	------------------------	-------------	------------------	--------------	---------------------------

2. Typically, I talk to my direct supervisor over the phone:

Daily	2 or 3 times a week	Once a week	Every other week	Once a month	Less than once a month
-------	------------------------	-------------	------------------	--------------	---------------------------

3. Typically, I communicate with my direct supervisor through email or skype:

Daily	2 or 3 times a week	Once a week	Every other week	Once a month	Less than once a month
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4. Typically, I communicate with my direct supervisor through text message:

Daily	2 or 3 times a week	Once a week	Every other week	Once a month	Less than once a month
-------	------------------------	-------------	------------------	--------------	---------------------------

## Authentic Leadership Questionnaire

Instructions: The following survey items refer to your leader's style, as you perceive it. Judge how frequently each statement fits his or her leadership style using the following scale:

Not at all	Once in a while	Sometimes	Fairly often	Frequently, if not always
0	1	2	3	4

### My Leader:

- |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2. admits mistakes when they are made:  | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 10. solicits views that challenge his or her deeply held positions:             | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 12. listens carefully to different points of view before coming to conclusions: | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 17. is approachable:  | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 18. can be accessed as needed:  | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 19. makes time to address my needs:   | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 20. responds to my communications in a timely manner:                           | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

Sample of questions asked

## Appendix F

### Demographics

Instructions: Please circle the following answer that applies:

- |  |     |    |
|--|-----|----|
| I am at least 18 years of age:   | Yes | No |
| I have been employed at L.L. Bean for 6 continuous months or more:               | Yes | No |
| The majority of my direct reports are located in the same building as my office: | Yes | No |

Instructions: Please circle the option that best finishes the statement:

1. Typically, I talk to the majority of my direct reports in person:

Daily	2 or 3 times a week	Once a week	Every other week	Once a month	Less than once a month
-------	------------------------	-------------	------------------	--------------	---------------------------

2. Typically, I talk to the majority of my direct reports over the phone:

Daily	2 or 3 times a week	Once a week	Every other week	Once a month	Less than once a month
-------	------------------------	-------------	------------------	--------------	---------------------------

3. Typically, I communicate with the majority of my direct reports through email or skype:

Daily	2 or 3 times a week	Once a week	Every other week	Once a month	Less than once a month
-------	------------------------	-------------	------------------	--------------	---------------------------

4. Typically, I communicate with the majority of my direct reports through text message:

Daily	2 or 3 times a week	Once a week	Every other week	Once a month	Less than once a month
-------	------------------------	-------------	------------------	--------------	---------------------------

## Authentic Leadership Questionnaire

Instructions: The following survey items refer to your leader's style, as you perceive it. Judge how frequently each statement fits his or her leadership style using the following scale:

Not at all 0	Once in a while 1	Sometimes 2	Fairly often 3	Frequently, if not always 4
-----------------	----------------------	----------------	-------------------	--------------------------------

### As a Leader I:

- |  |   |   |   |   |   |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2. admit mistakes when they are made:  | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 10. solicit views that challenge my deeply held positions:                     | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 12. listen carefully to different points of view before coming to conclusions: | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 17. am approachable:   | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 18. can be accessed as needed:   | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 19. makes time to address my employees' needs:                                 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 20. responds to communications in a timely manner:                             | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

Sample of questions asked

### **Biography of the Author**

Kasey Gallant currently works at L.L. Bean Inc. as a Frontline Supervisor, and is concurrently working to conclude her Master's Degree at the University of Southern Maine in Leadership and Organizational studies. Her spare time is spent hanging out with her precocious puppy, Houston, and relaxing at her family's camp.