

Being Real and Aware, You'll Rarely Overshare

Vanessa Van Edwards is on-point as she describes authenticity and the challenges that come with it in this blog. Having real, relevant, authentic connections is something that most of us (hopefully) strive for in our lives. You don't want to consciously create and maintain a "fake" relationship, right? On the flip-side, you occasionally need to apply some filters to create relationships with people. I believe there's a fine line between being authentic and oversharing, especially in your professional life. What I've found is that by being real AND aware, you'll rarely overshare.

How Awareness Helps

In my experience of experimenting with being more vulnerable or real in my conversations, I generally start off with one, bite-sized, easy-to-digest piece of personal info. After delivering it, I pay close attention to how it's perceived by the other person. Was it savored? Did it trigger some sort of reaction? Was there a follow-up question? If so, I can see that they are open to continuing down this deeper path of conversation.

Sometimes, however, the other person seems disinterested in my sharing and I watch what I shared instantly get swallowed with little to no recognition. This signals to me to gently cruise along with light conversation and avoid getting too personal.

This awareness creates the balance and space for one to engage at a level they're comfortable with and prevents me, in this situation, from being perceived as an "over-sharer" – especially when it's a topic that excites me and I could get carried away.

Applying It at Work

Perhaps this is easier to grasp by sharing a real-life example of it playing out when working with one of my clients. I was brought in to build a marketing strategy with a 1-year plan of activities and deliverables, plus a roadmap of future considerations and ideas to scale their business to grow exponentially over a pre-defined period. I facilitated a handful of conversations with the co-founder / managing partner to fully grasp his vision and the direction he wanted to take the business. I left those discussions feeling that something was left uncovered but couldn't put my finger on it.

I continued my work and held numerous meetings with staff members to gather tangible insights into the business, understand where staff felt the biggest opportunity was, and learn how they might go about pursuing it. I had real conversations and openly shared that I'm holding space for them to be as real and as open as they like. I kept conversations casual, relatable (while not oversharing), fun and on-point, which is pretty much the way I tend to operate. For most folks, this bridged connections where brilliant, fresh ideas were shared as well as tangible, real-life scenarios allowing us to fully appreciate the significance and relevance.

For a few, info was shared as if rehearsed and/or their body language spoke discomfort. In these cases, I applied filters and provided them space to remain safe and sheltered and only share what felt right to them – no harm, no foul.

tightness and twisted ideas/opinions – the tension. I’ve also come entered some meeting rooms that felt sterile, empty, and desolate – completely void of creativity or progress. In any case, I clear out all the old energy and make room for new, fresh, and healthy energy through HUGE breaths that I exhale into the room. These breaths are soulful, deeply rooted, and feel like a gusty wind from Mother Nature that clears the room, breathing new life and light.

After I met everyone, I sensed they viewed me as part of the team and there was a layer of trust. Staff members followed up with me after the fact and shared additional info and ideas. Others offered to help where possible.

I reviewed the info I gathered and replayed conversations I had with each person, organized my learnings and drafted a framework. It felt empty and lifeless to me. Yet, it did indeed meet the criteria of a marketing strategy and check the box for that part of the engagement.

I presented the proposed strategy to the co-founder/managing partner - it was well received and certainly accepted. But I still felt there was something that was left unsaid that needed to be said. I genuinely asked, “What is *your* long-term strategy for the business? I want to be sure this framework supports you along with the business and I sense there’s more to discuss to bring greater meaning to this strategy...”

And then the information came, and it was BIG – it was his exit strategy! This. THIS! This info shined light into all the gray areas of my work plus provided the clarity required to pivot and look at the most pressing need.

If I stayed the course and filtered my own authenticity then I would’ve delivered a comprehensive marketing strategy and plan that probably would’ve never gotten off the ground since it misaligned with the *real* strategy. Instead, I chose to be sincere and honest and, frankly, human. This created space for my client to do the same.

Authenticity Brings Richer Conversation

As the story outlines, practicing awareness while being real and authentic has served me well in my work. It has opened the door for richer conversation which brings far greater meaning and insights into why one is motivated, how they think / operate, what is / isn’t important and when enough is enough.

This combo – being aware *and* authentic - is my superpower. I’ve come to find that it’s a main reason why others view me as a trusted advisor. This is how I create a safe space with those I talk to. This is how I bring teams together - by watching for and feeling out sometimes unspoken queues.

When I do this, others feel a sense of familia or community. I don’t just bring people together to reach a goal - I create a tribe as a connector and influencer. This is what I do and how I do it. And you can do it too!

Set up a [20 minute call here](#) to see if we are a good fit to spark your project!



A passionate organizer of people and initiatives, Erica Smigielski brings over twenty years of experience in project leadership to financial software and SaaS companies who want to launch their next big idea. She leads large-scale, complex projects like product launches and company mergers and acquisitions as well as focused efforts to bring structure and process to fast-track businesses. Erica holds certifications as a Stanford Advanced Project Manager as well as a Certified Group Facilitator, making her a master orchestrator of strategic planning, as well as a skillful communicator who can expertly navigate complex group dynamics.