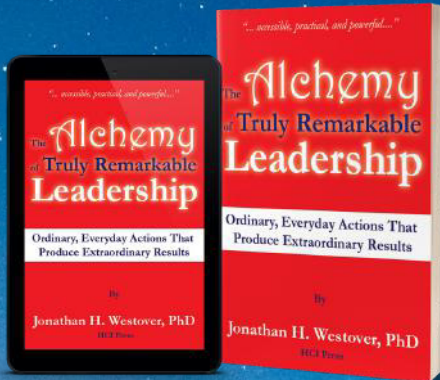


# Human Capital Leadership

by Human Capital Innovations, LLC

Helping You Maximize Your Human Capital Potential



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Josh Bersin

Global Tech Industry Analyst and Thought Leader

Check out the Human Capital Innovations (HCI) Podcast





# 3 Steps to Finding Your True Leadership Voice

by Stephen Kohler

## Tips on How to Find your Authentic Voice and Utilize it to its Fullest

“Get rid of it,” he said. “Get rid of what?” I replied. “All of that which is not truly yours,” he replied.

My vocal coach and I were in our first lesson together and he astutely recognized that what he was hearing from me was not my true voice, but rather what I thought a singer “should” sound like. “I want to hear the real you – not some facsimile of someone you’re trying to imitate,” he continued. I smiled and thanked him for identifying an underlying issue to which so many of us can relate, not just in singing, but as individuals and leaders.

How many of us spend countless hours trying to be someone or something that we really aren’t? We’ve all done it – pursuing a job (or even career) that wasn’t a fit, a relationship we knew wasn’t supportive or even living in an environment that wasn’t healthy. We spend so much time doing it – not operating in our “true voice” – that we forget that we’re doing it. Here’s a quick test you can try at home: ask a family member to observe you briefly in a work capacity (think Zoom call – many of us are working from home, after-all). Afterwards, ask them how your “work self” is compared to the “real you” at home. Most of us would undoubtedly receive feedback that we’re not operating as ourselves, but rather some facsimile. I’ve done this test myself and the feedback I receive is both hilarious and spot-on in terms of my ongoing journey toward authenticity.

Why does this happen, you ask? Well, as social creatures, we’ve been trained our whole lives to behave in ways that we





believe will keep us from getting kicked out of our Tribe Today, that would equate to a job, family, relationship, etc. The problem with this line of reasoning is that it's often filled with faulty assumptions. Will your boss really fire you if you're honest about that project issue? (P.S. If s/he/they do, consider it a gift as you shouldn't be working anyplace that doesn't value candor.) The other problem with this pattern is that being someone other than our true selves doesn't serve anyone. It certainly doesn't serve us – often leading to constant stress and anxiety – and it doesn't help anyone else. After all, how can we put our best foot forward if our hearts aren't really in it?

Leading with your own authentic voice is critical to success and happiness in every aspect of life. **Below are three tips to help you find your true voice and utilize it to its fullest.**



## Find Your Natural Register

In vocal training, one of the first things students are asked to do is find their register, which is the range of tones that come naturally such as baritone, tenor, alto or soprano. From a leadership perspective, we can do this by identifying our natural characteristics or strengths. Do you tend to be more extroverted or introverted? Each is highly effective in

their own ways. Do you prefer being an individual contributor or love the challenge of leading a large team? Both roles are vital. Do you excel in more structured environments or thrive in chaos? Each exists naturally in different organizations.

In the same way that a vocal choir needs ensemble members to support all registers (from bass to soprano tessitura), so too does an organization. Metaphorically, if you're truly a tenor, don't try to be an alto. Instead lean into your natural strengths and work to hone the skill set that comes along with them.



## Practice for Consistency and Confidence

Once you've found your authentic voice, it's important to practice it. This may sound odd – having to practice your own authentic voice – but, it's not something people are accustomed to. By practicing enough so that you can use your authentic voice confidently in any setting, you're ultimately allowing your authentic voice to become a true defining feature. The same can be applied to leadership. The point of finding your authentic leadership voice is for you to be able to lead confidently in any context – whether

it's a one-on-one meeting with a direct report or presenting on stage to an audience of 1,000 potential customers. An authentic leader tends to be more consistent and trusted, building up a reputation that makes them respected and successful.



## Don't be Afraid to Grow your Authentic Voice

Just because you found your authentic voice doesn't mean it can't change and evolve over time. Instead, lean into that development without fear of mistakes. Miles Davis famously said, "Do not fear mistakes. There are none." This wisdom encourages us to constantly stretch ourselves and try new things. If we're not dropping a few notes here and there, then we're not really growing as leaders.

The most progressive teams and organizations dedicate time and resources to do exactly this – experiment and create the next innovation. The British-Australian pop group, The Bee Gees, stumbled on what became their signature sound – the use of falsetto vocals – by accident. Another great example is 3M's famous Post It Note – a brilliant accident – and arguably what they are most known for today. Consider ways that you can continue to be intentional about growing your voice – both figuratively and literally.

To find our own voice, we must often (as Yoda famously said), "Unlearn what we have learned." Once we do, however, we'll no doubt notice the resonance.

## About the Author



Stephen Kohler, Audira's Founder & CEO, brings passion for people along with 25 years of extensive corporate experience within organizations ranging from startup to Fortune 100, across multiple industries.

His credentials include an MBA from University of Chicago's Booth School of Business, a BA in Philosophy from Northwestern University, and is a certified Professional Coach (PCC, CPCC) and Balanced Scorecard Professional (BSP).

His passions include spending time with his wife, two children and two dogs. He is a life-long musician, avid BBQ enthusiast and loves traveling the world.

