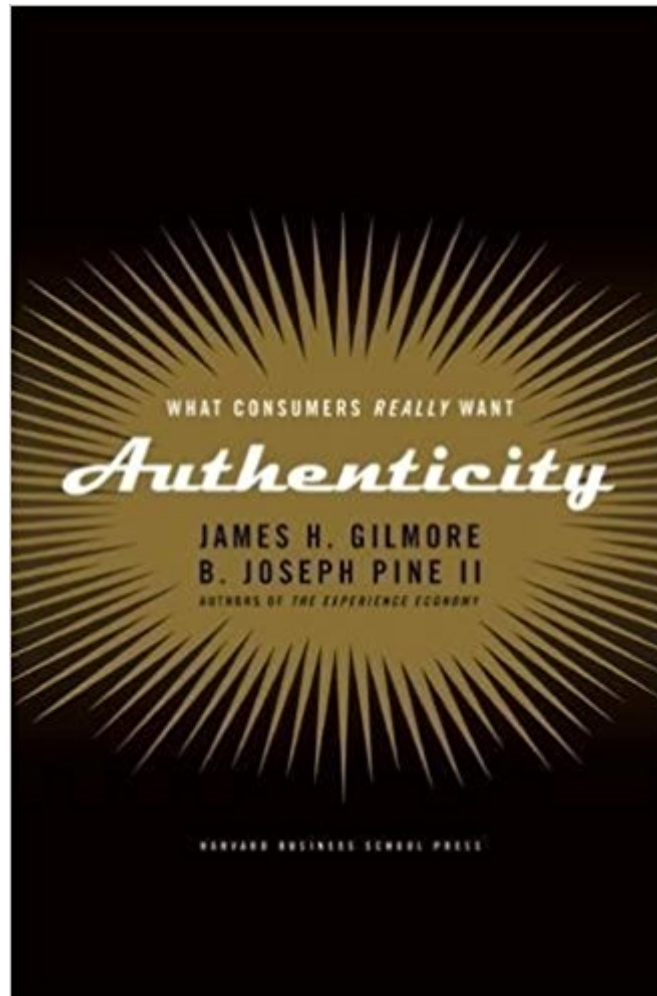


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# Authenticity: What Consumers Really Want



## Synopsis

Contrived. Disingenuous. Phony. Inauthentic. Do your customers use any of these words to describe what you sell—or how you sell it? If so, welcome to the club. Inundated by fakes and sophisticated counterfeits, people increasingly see the world in terms of real or fake. They would rather buy something real from someone genuine rather than something fake from some phony. When deciding to buy, consumers judge an offering's (and a company's) authenticity as much as—if not more than—price, quality, and availability. In *Authenticity*, James H. Gilmore and B. Joseph Pine II argue that to trounce rivals companies must grasp, manage, and excel at rendering authenticity. Through examples from a wide array of industries as well as government, nonprofit, education, and religious sectors, the authors show how to manage customers' perception of authenticity by: recognizing how businesses "fake it;" appealing to the five different genres of authenticity; charting how to be "true to self" and what you say you are; and crafting and implementing business strategies for rendering authenticity. The first to explore what authenticity really means for businesses and how companies can approach it both thoughtfully and thoroughly, this book is a must-read for any organization seeking to fulfill consumers' intensifying demand for the real deal.

## Book Information

Hardcover: 320 pages

Publisher: Harvard Business Review Press; 1 edition (September 24, 2007)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1591391458

ISBN-13: 978-1591391456

Product Dimensions: 6.4 x 1.2 x 9.5 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.4 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.4 out of 5 stars 30 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #106,861 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #33 in [Books > Business & Money > Marketing & Sales > Marketing > Product Management](#) #88 in [Books > Business & Money > Marketing & Sales > Marketing > Direct](#) #122 in [Books > Business & Money > Marketing & Sales > Marketing > Research](#)

## Customer Reviews

This eye-opening but muddled volume tells companies to remain true to self or, at least, to appear genuine, arguing that in a world increasingly filled with deliberately and sensationally staged

experiences... consumers choose to buy or not buy based on how real they perceive an offering to be. Everything that forms a company's identity—from its name and practices to its product details—affects consumers' perceptions of its authenticity. Juggling philosophical concepts, in-depth case studies and ad slogans, Gilmore and Pine (*The Experience Economy*) run into trouble with a chapter called Fake, Fake, It's All Fake, which eviscerates the entire idea of authenticity: Despite claims of 'real' and 'authentic' in product packaging, nothing from businesses is really authentic. Everything is artificial, manmade, fake. The argument is unexpected and perhaps brilliant—yet rather confusing, since most of *Authenticity* argues that businesses should strive to not only appear authentic but to be so. The book's bullet points, charts and matrices add to the tangle, as the authors' early advice (your business offerings must get real) becomes a demand for furrowed-brow soul-searching. Still, the prose is snappy and conversational, and the book is densely packed with insights and provocations, and may inspire some executives to consider how consumers see their company. (Nov.) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

James Gilmore and Joseph Pine are co-founders of Strategic Horizons LLP, a 'thinking studio' that combines the best of consulting firms, think tanks, and acting workshops to help companies design all-new say of adding value to their economic offerings. Together they authored the bestseller, *The Experience Economy*, and edited *Marketing of One* and Pine himself wrote *Mass Customization*.

According to this book, today consumers want authentic experiences in memorable events that engage them in an inherently personal way such as being real, original, genuine, sincere, and deliberately and sensationally staged experiences. I really liked the ideas of authentic experiences in this book.

Having read and marked up their first book multiple times, what I've come to appreciate is the depth of thinking by Pine and Gilmore. Their view takes time to absorb and apply and is much richer than the typical business text. This one's a far cry from books like "Who Moved My Cheese?" Written much like a textbook, *Authenticity* is full of insights and pearls that will take us a long time to unpack. The journey picks up right where *EE* left off and takes us down the path of understanding how consumers make decisions in the Experience Economy. I've already dog-eared and marked up many pages and am finding that the footnotes themselves are like a book within a book. The authors aren't afraid to cite other experts in their effort to bring a new language to the discussion on

authenticity. In my own attempts to explain this concept to others, I have found truly helpful the concept of "I like that. I'm like that," which they attribute to Virginia Postrel (pp. 93-94 and chapter 5 footnotes 65-66). Like its predecessor, this new text is one to savor and think about. Its value to those of you engaged in the Experience Economy will only increase over time.

This truly is a tour de force that deserves the potent descriptors of "groundbreaking" and "defining a management discipline." This may be a challenging read, not due to the writing per se, but because of the newness and depth of the subject. Gilmore and Pine's take on authenticity is novel enough that the reader may not have the mental hooks in their management theory framework to immediately hang the new ideas. But this is exactly what I would expect from the definition of a new management discipline. The book builds the case for authenticity as a dominant consumer sensibility. From there, the construct framing the realness and fakeness of economic offerings forms the foundation for all that follows. Rendering authenticity takes authenticity out of the realm of ambiguity and into the realm of explicit definition. This process addresses the essence of business-organization identity and the underpinnings of the value of its offerings. The author's approach to rendering authenticity is a uniquely substantive approach to 1) exploring and defining your identity, what it is "you will be true to", 2) defining your total offering "to be what it says it is," and 3) the possibility of joining these two together for greater synergy, forming a more powerful authentic offering. The book culminates with an approach to acting into the future. This approach employs the authenticity framework and the juxtaposition process used to understand and render authenticity, but extends it to explore an unlimited number of dimensions to spur the creation of novel value. This book is a 'must read' for those responsible for strategy and creating unique value in businesses of all types.

The book contains a lot of information that is repeated over and over, just by different descriptions. Other than that, the information given was pretty helpful. I work in the residential housing sector, so customers wanting something that is their own is number one for me. I picked up a few tips and ideas from the text that could be applied within my business. Overall, it is a great book for those who are caught in the cookie cutter processes of the time.

Great concepts but hard to read.

This book was very insightful and James Gilmore has a unique way at looking at the economy,

culture, and society.

a very interesting book that is very useful both for who works in economy's sector and who's like a relaxing book for everyday's life.

the ideas in this book will blow your mind. linking post-modernism to business strategy. its only flaw was quoting a dave mathews lyric. ugh. other than that, astounding. now i know the difference between pseudo and quasi.

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