You Won’t Make It If You Fake It by Bill George

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The article You Won’t Make It If You Fake It was written by Bill George. George is a senior fellow at Harvard Business School and former chair and CEO of Medtronic. The article focuses primarily on the saying “fake it until you fake it,” and explains why this is a poor philosophy to live by if you are a leader.

While many see the “fake it until you make it” as a philosophy to use to get through difficult situations, there are a lot of examples of people using this philosophy and finding themselves at dead ends. One example is the Theranos CEO Elizabeth Holmes, who built up a $9 billion company and was named one of the 100 most influential people of 2015. When an investigation by the Wall Street Journal found that she had submitted data that was insufficient to claim the accuracy of her product, she lost almost all partnerships. People will be unwilling to follow your lead if they sense that you are faking it. All people make mistakes, but it is the leaders who “fake it” that we find are the ones that tend to not face their shortcomings by either hiding them or blaming others. You will only be successful as a leader if you allow yourself to be an authentic leader who values transparency and fosters personal growth and development.

This article is compelling because as I was going through my high school leadership classes I heard this “fake it until you make it” phrase a lot. When this was going around more frequently, I noticed that the students in my classes, particularly the ones who were saying it, were the ones hiding their mistakes or not taking responsibility for them. They were also the students who I felt like non-leadership kids felt disdain towards. There was a lot of criticism about the school’s leadership program. However, after we switched advisors and made efforts to ensure genuine leaders were in the class, we had a lot less conflict in the class and a lot less criticism from students outside of the class.