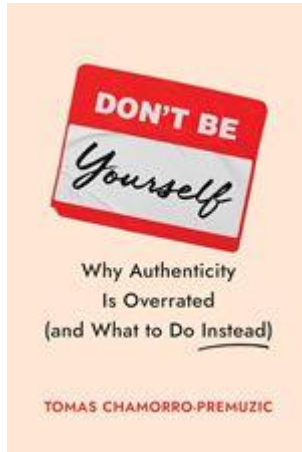


## PM WORLD BOOK REVIEW <sup>1</sup>



Book Title: ***Don't Be Yourself – Why Authenticity Is Overrated (and What to Do Instead)***

Author: **Dr. Tomas Chamorro-Premuzic**

Publisher: Harvard Business School Publishing

List Price: \$30                      Format: Hardcover, 256 pages

Publication Date: October 2025                      ISBN: 9781647829834

Reviewer: **Dr. Pernel Roberts, PMP**

Review Date: April 2026

---

### Introduction

In *Don't Be Yourself*, Dr. Tomas Chamorro-Premuzic sets out to challenge one of the most celebrated ideals of modern culture: authenticity. Rather than dismissing the concept outright, he issues a careful and well-reasoned warning about how authenticity has been redefined in recent decades. Particularly in the world of work, and the subtle but consequential dangers that have followed. He acknowledges the legitimate, well-intentioned roots of the concept while making a compelling case that its popular contemporary version has gone seriously off course. To guide the reader, he identifies four distinct "authenticity traps" and offers practical, grounded alternatives to each.

### Overview of Book's Structure

The book opens with a brisk, engaging ten-page introduction that establishes the terrain: what psychologists say about authenticity, what popular culture says, and what Dr. Chamorro-Premuzic intends to argue. From there, the book unfolds in two substantive parts.

Part 1 spans five chapters and focuses squarely on diagnosing the problem. The opening chapter provides a broad overview of the four authenticity traps, with each of the four subsequent chapters examining one trap in depth:

- **Trap 1:** Always Be Honest, with Yourself and Others
- **Trap 2:** Be True to Your Values and Follow Your Heart, No Matter What
- **Trap 3:** Don't Worry About What Others Think of You

---

<sup>1</sup> How to cite this work: Roberts, P. (2025). Don't Be Yourself – Why Authenticity Is Overrated (and What to Do Instead), book review, *PM World Journal*, Vol. XIV, Issue VI, June.

- **Trap 4: Bring Your Whole Self to Work**

Part 2, titled *What To Do Instead*, pivots decisively from diagnosis to prescription across three focused chapters. Each chapter applies the author's corrective lens to a distinct and consequential domain: Career Advancement, Leadership, and Diversity and Inclusion.

## Highlights

Dr. Chamorro-Premuzic opens by establishing just how dominant the authenticity movement has become, citing prominent psychologists such as Brené Brown and noting that Merriam-Webster selected *authenticity* as its 2023 Word of the Year. This cultural moment sets the stakes clearly: authenticity is not a fringe idea, it is a mainstream mandate.

From that foundation, the author makes a bold and counterintuitive move. He invokes the concept of the "wisdom of crowds," only to turn it on its head. Crowds, he argues, tend toward conformity and error as often as toward insight, and in the case of authenticity, the crowd has gotten it wrong. Popularity, in other words, is not the same as truth.

One of the author's central concerns is that society has transformed unfiltered self-expression into a life hack. A convenient shortcut to credibility, career success, and moral authority. His repeated use of the phrase "*authenticity cult*" signals not mere academic disagreement, but a deep and well-founded frustration with how the concept now functions as the primary currency for evaluating leadership effectiveness and professional worth. Importantly, Dr. Chamorro-Premuzic is careful not to condemn the word itself. He traces its more honorable origins. Rooted in genuine honesty and self-awareness before charting how it drifted, over time, into something closer to egotism and entitlement dressed in the language of virtue.

In Part 2, the author delivers an extensive and illuminating treatment of Career Advancement, Leadership, and Diversity and Inclusion. His opening argument is unambiguous: research consistently shows that career success depends on the very opposite of "just being yourself." True professional advancement, he contends, requires deliberate self-editing. The willingness to adapt one's behavior to context, to consider others' perspectives genuinely, and to operate within values and norms beyond one's own. Perhaps the most provocative point in this section concerns leadership specifically: the author argues that a degree of behavioral adjustment, what many might instinctively label as "faking it," is not a character flaw but an essential leadership competency. Those unwilling to modulate their behavior in response to social and organizational expectations may find the path to effective leadership firmly closed.

## **Highlights: What I liked!**

Among the four traps, Trap 2: "Follow Your Heart and Be True to Your Values" stood out as particularly striking. This phrase is so thoroughly embedded in celebrity culture and social media that it has achieved the status of unquestioned wisdom. Yet the author challenges it with a simple but sobering observation: history's most destructive figures, dictators, architects of corruption, toxic and abusive managers, may well have been doing exactly that. Following one's heart, it turns out, is no guarantee of good outcomes. It depends entirely on what kind of heart one has.

The author extends this point further, arguing that many of the poor decisions we make in daily life, our biases, our bad habits, our comfortable rationalizations, are precisely the consequence of following emotion over reason. This reframe is one of the book's most practically useful insights: the core problem is not a lack of authenticity, but an uncritical over-reliance on unexamined feeling as a guide to action..

## **Who might benefit from the Book**

This book will resonate with virtually anyone who navigates a professional environment, but it is especially valuable for young professionals and emerging leaders who are serious about making a meaningful and positive impact on their teams and organizations. At a time when "just be yourself" has become the default career advice, Dr. Chamorro-Premuzic offers a much-needed corrective. One grounded in research rather than inspiration.

The book effectively dismantles the perceived superpower that popular culture has assigned to radical authenticity, replacing it with something more actionable and more honest. Along the way, the author plants clear warning signs at each of the four traps, then offers three constructive and practical detours for those willing to take a more self-aware and adaptive path forward.

## **Conclusion**

*Don't Be Yourself* is a thought-provoking, research-backed challenge to one of the most deeply held assumptions of contemporary professional life. Dr. Chamorro-Premuzic writes with precision and confidence, dismantling the authenticity myth not out of cynicism, but out of a genuine concern for how misapplied ideals can quietly derail careers, undermine leadership, and damage organizations.

What makes this book particularly effective is its balance. The author is neither dismissive of authenticity's origins nor naïve about the real harm its modern incarnation can produce. He honors the concept's legitimate core while exposing the excesses that have overtaken it, and he provides a practical framework for doing better.

For project managers, PMO leaders, and anyone responsible for leading people and delivering results, the book's central message carries direct relevance: effective leadership is not about self-expression. It is about self-awareness, adaptability, and the discipline to prioritize impact over identity. In a field where stakeholder management, team dynamics, and organizational influence are daily realities, *Don't Be Yourself* is a timely and worthwhile read. I enjoy it!

---

For more about this book, go to: <https://store.hbr.org/product/don-t-be-yourself-why-authenticity-is-overrated-and-what-to-do-instead/10753>

---

### About the Reviewer



**Dr. Pernel Roberts**

Texas, USA



**Dr. Pernel Roberts** (PgMP®, PMP®) is a PMO executive and transformation leader with over 25 years of experience in governance-driven program delivery, benefits realization management, and organizational capability building. He is the founder of More Project Success LLC and a proud member of the PMI Dallas Chapter and Frisco Chamber of Commerce. A seasoned educator, Dr. Roberts has prepared more than 300 candidates for PMP and CAPM certification since 2011. He can be contacted at [pernel@moreprojectsuccess.com](mailto:pernel@moreprojectsuccess.com).

---

*Editor's note: This book review was the result of a partnership between the PM World Journal and the [PMI Dallas Chapter](#). Authors and publishers provide the books to the PM World Journal's managing editor; books are delivered to the PMI Dallas Chapter, where they are offered free to PMI members to review; book reviews are published in the PM World Journal and PM World Library. PMI Dallas Chapter members can keep the books as well as claim PDUs for PMP recertification when their reviews are published.*

*If you have read a good PM-related book recently and would like to publish a book review, or if you are an author or publisher of a project management-related book, and would like the book reviewed through this program, please contact [Editor@pmworldjournal.com](mailto:Editor@pmworldjournal.com).*