

## ■ ASK AN EXPERT

Stephen Drain, director of the AUT Centre for Innovative Leadership, discusses authentic leadership

### **What is 'authentic leadership'?**

Being yourself. Authentic leadership is about leading with your own sense of genuine purpose. It is leading with an open and exposed self; acknowledging that we can't possibly have the answers to everything and having the courage to get people around us who will not only fill the gaps but expose those gaps in us.

### **Which leader do you admire most?**

Twice a week I run with an informal group of marathoners, led by a man called Michael, an auto electrician. Michael knows everything there is about running, so that's a good place to start from, but that's only enough to get off the starting blocks (so to speak!) in leadership. He never boasts about his achievements, but as we run he tells stories that inspire us to keep going. He's authentic, because he really cares about us and wants us to complete the training safely and finish our next marathon. He genuinely wants to see us succeed. Not for him, but for ourselves.

### **What kind of person will be attracted to the Centre's programmes?**

Happy people! People who are enthusiastic about life and want to grow themselves so they can grow others. People who are open to the idea that to grow others is really what leadership is. From that place, others will follow and as the leader they will be able to do great things of meaning with their organisation or team.

### **What is your background?**

I grew up in the 1960s and 1970s as the sixth of seven children. When I left school Mum drove me to Canterbury University to enrol in a BCom but a police recruitment brochure lured me away. By the time of the Springbok tour of 1981, I was a police cadet in a career that took me to being a detective. I then joined the newly established Serious Fraud Office as an Investigator. There I learnt about creating systems and processes, and discovered that interviewing people

under pressure gives you unique insights. I completed a postgraduate diploma in finance and an MBA, then started running leadership courses at a leadership training company. Earlier this year, I set up the AUT Centre for Innovative Leadership.

### **Where are you on the leadership journey?**

Halfway exactly! I know what drives me and I get satisfaction from building things and helping other people grow. I know every encounter is a chance to learn and grow, and the more I know about myself the more I realise there is more to learn and grow, and I love it.

### **Where can I read more?**

You can visit the Centre's website [www.leadership.aut.ac.nz](http://www.leadership.aut.ac.nz), my leadership blog: [www.stephendrain.wordpress.com](http://www.stephendrain.wordpress.com), or Twitter: [www.twitter.com/AUTLeadership](http://www.twitter.com/AUTLeadership) The Centre's inaugural Authentic Leadership Course will be held on 15-20 November.