



am authenticity matters

ISSUE 1: JUNE 2022

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THE POWER OF AUTHENTICITY

WHAT DOES IT MEAN (AND WHY DOES IT MATTER?)



FLEISHMANHILLARD

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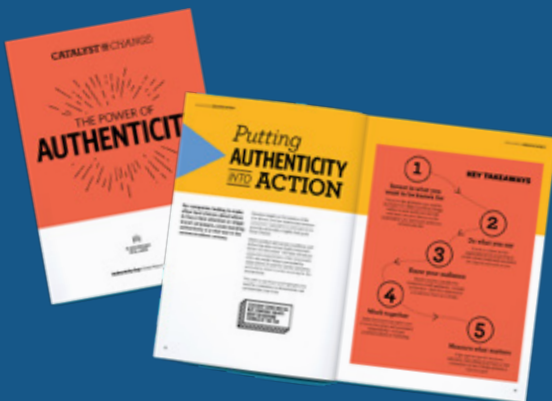
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DOWNLOAD OUR LATEST AUTHENTICITY GAP REPORT

Our authenticity research across five markets and 200+ companies examines the actions brands need to take to catch up to consumers' expectations.

The report provides unique insights into the emerging opportunities and threats facing some of the world's most familiar companies and brands – and crucially, what consumers expect business leaders to do about them.

WHAT DOES AUTHENTICITY EVEN MEAN? (AND WHY DOES IT MATTER?)





It's one of those words – like 'insights' – that's often used and even more frequently claimed.

It's as if everyone knows that businesses and brands have to *look and sound* authentic to succeed, but nobody remembers quite what you have to do to actually *be* authentic.

Politicians, influencers, business leaders all appear to know that 'the public' respond better, buy more, and vote for people or brands who're authentic. But often as not, they miss the mark when it comes to actual delivery.

As the articles in this edition of *Authenticity Matters* illustrate, it's not enough to look authentic, you have to actually *be* authentic. Which means the actions you take and the commitments you make need to align with all that you profess to be.

FleishmanHillard's latest [Authenticity Gap](#) research, which spans five markets, shows that where there's misalignment between what an organisation says and how it really behaves a brand and reputation vulnerability arises.

How often do we see employees call foul on their employer's claims to care for their workforce, be committed to DE&I or the environment?

In the stories that follow, you'll hear how people from all walks of life are striving to live authentically. FleishmanHillard Director Pip Solway discusses [Authentic Beauty](#) and hears from Sue Moore at Zebedee, an inclusion agency committed to ensuring the visibility of people with disabilities, alternative appearances and trans/non-binary people are reflected in advertising and marketing communications. [The voices of Gen-Z](#) in the climate debate are called upon by FleishmanHillard's TJ Jordan and Caitlin Whyte to tackle the subject of greenwashing, before we hear from [Kate Nicholls, CEO](#) of UKHospitality who, when communicating on behalf of the entire hospitality sector during the pandemic, concludes that her passionate belief in the cause she represented was critical to building authentic engagement with policy-makers and wider industry stakeholders.

There's even an insider's view of [the world of magic](#). A place not normally associated with authenticity. It's in here, so it must be true.



Ali Gee

Deputy CEO,
FleishmanHillard UK

AUTHENTIC BEAUTY



Visibility and representation

**Beauty is in the eye of the beholder,
but we know that across the world
attitudes are changing as perceptions
of the 'visual norm' evolve.**



Pip Solway

Director and Partner,
FleishmanHillard UK



Sue Moore

Senior Booker,
Zebedee

Research from Kantar reveals

65%

of consumers say that it's important that the companies they buy from actively promote diversity across society.

And we are seeing brands rapidly adapt to more inclusive campaigns. However, for every brand that gets this right, there are many that fail to consider the intricacies of true representation.



Last year, FleishmanHillard UK partnered with leading inclusive talent agency Zebedee in a UK industry-first partnership to increase the visibility of people with disabilities, alternative appearances and trans/non-binary in the media.

Zebedee is a specialist talent agency that represents more than five hundred people with a variety of needs and is continuing to grow as both brands and consumers realise the importance of authentic imagery.

FleishmanHillard UK Director and Partner, Pip Solway is the proud mother of Aoife, who is signed to Zebedee and recently starred in Vogue. Pip is raising a daughter who is leading the 'Inclusion Revolution' by not letting Down's Syndrome define her abilities.

Pip caught up with Sue Moore, Senior Booker at Zebedee to discuss the future of beauty standards, and unique challenges when casting across a range of abilities.

Pip: As you know, I'm hugely inspired by the work you and the team do at Zebedee. The agency started five years ago, and the use of diverse and different models has hugely changed in that time. What do you think are the core reasons for this?

Sue: Without blowing our own trumpet — the reason for such a big change is largely down to Zebedee! Before we existed, disability was never part of the diversity debate. A plus-size model was a diverse model. Brands had simply never considered using a model with a disability or a visible difference. For many different reasons, mainly fear of getting it wrong or worrying about consumer reaction. Zebedee's work in creating the agency and pushing our models out there has had a really big impact.

AUTHENTIC BEAUTY

In regards to casting, what is the biggest challenge for you when looking for models that are disabled or have visible difference? How does this work when the normal 'beauty standards' aren't considered?

That's an interesting question. We receive hundreds of applications every week, as we consider all ages, looks and abilities. We submit our talent with visible differences for every brief. I think the biggest challenge is shortlisting the best of the best as we get so many applications that are simply wonderful so it's hard!

You represent a diverse range of abilities at Zebedee, what is the biggest sector that you've seen growth in – and how do you predict this will change the future of casting?

Over the past few years we have seen a lot of growth in our adult models in general. When we first started out, I often heard 'we might use a cute little kid with Down's Syndrome, but never adults' which was shocking. Despite this, our adult division has seen incredible growth and as a company we are five times busier across our men's and women's divisions than we were this time last year.

“Brands may fear tokenism, but you have to start somewhere. Bring disability into the conversation on each and every job.”

Sue Moore
Senior Booker, Zebedee

It's so amazing to hear and see that this change is happening. Finally, for any brands that haven't yet explored diverse casting, what's your advice for getting started? What do they need to consider when planning campaigns?

As an agency we do not want to be regarded as a specialist agency — we want to be known as the leading inclusive agency. We want brands to consider using people with disabilities and visible differences in ALL campaigns and that's where to start — or even better, bring disability into the creative brief. They may fear tokenism, but you have to start somewhere. Bring disability into the conversation on each and every job. Of course, some talent may not fit but at least they are being considered.

There are a few practical things that brands need to consider, but it is mainly about having a bit more forward planning to ensure that disabled talent get as much notice and time to prepare as possible. For instance, we would always recommend a venue is accessible for all abilities, but if a model is deaf they would need to specifically provide an interpreter.

**For more information about
FleishmanHillard's Zebedee
partnership or strategic counsel
in diversity, equity & inclusion
contact: philippa.solway@fleishman.com**



AUTHENTIC ACTION



NO TIME TO LIE:

Gen-Z's perspective on corporate *greenwashing*



TJ Jordan
Creative
FleishmanHillard UK



Caitlin Whyte
Account Manager
FleishmanHillard UK

WITH THE INCREASE IN DEMAND FOR GLOBAL BRANDS TO BE MORE SUSTAINABLE, HOW MANY BRANDS ARE ACTUALLY LIVING UP TO THEIR CLAIMS OF COMMITTING TO GREEN PRACTICE?

In recent times, the term ‘greenwashing’ has been used to describe companies that purport to be environmentally conscious for marketing or reputational purposes, but their action does not reflect the message they are communicating.

Research shows that Gen-Z is more invested in sustainable business practices than other generations. This group has also been shown to be more likely to consider a brand’s dedication to social causes as factors for brand trust and favourability when making purchase decisions. Following our 2021 report **‘The Voice of the Climate Generation’**, FleishmanHillard UK Creative TJ Jordan and Account Manager Caitlin Whyte take a closer look at what greenwashing means to Gen-Z and discuss the report’s conclusions with a focus group made up of Gen-Zers Olivia H., Liam, Olivia N. and Alix.

AUTHENTIC ACTION

Who owns the term ‘greenwashing’?

If you want to get the most helpful definition of greenwashing, ask someone born after 1996. “It’s when a company is lying, basically.” 17-year-old student Olivia gave it to us straighter than anyone in our industry would.

For years, the term ‘greenwashing’ has been the lexicon of experienced activists, media, and scientists. An accusation reserved for experts. But it’s time for the professionals to relinquish their grasp. In a world of Greta, Extinction Rebellion and high-profile COP conferences, greenwashing is now a concept owned as much by the consumer as it is the specialist. And even if some young people don’t have the term itself in their lexicon, it’s Gen-Z who have the strongest grip.

This is a generation fully immersed in the climate crisis issue. Our 2021 report, [**‘The Voice of the Climate Generation’**](#), revealed that nearly a third of 18-24 year olds (30%) campaigned or voted for a political leader with a manifesto that explicitly addressed the climate crisis, whilst just under half (44%) have searched for information about a company’s climate change policies or commitments. But while those policies and commitments are habitually framed by their author in a progressive light, nearly two thirds of Gen-Z don’t believe that older generations are tackling the crisis fast enough (65%). They think businesses are *lying*.

A large, stylized orange outline of the number 30% is centered on the page. The numbers are thick and hand-drawn in style, with the percentage sign also being a simple outline.

**OF 18-24-YEAR-OLDS
VOTED FOR A POLITICIAN
THAT EXPLICITLY ADDRESSED
THE CLIMATE CRISIS**

CREATIVE NARRATIVES THAT SKIRT AROUND THE FACTS OR DON'T PLACE CLAIMS IN A FAIR CONTEXT JUST WON'T FLY

An instinctive definition

Gen-Z's concern about greenwashing is so authentic that Olivia's instinctive definition about truth and lies provides fresh insight into the challenge to curb it. First, when it comes to companies and their green credentials, lying doesn't just mean 'not telling the truth'. Becoming fully-fledged members of society during the late 2010s, when most companies and governments were only just clicking into action on the situation, this demographic is inherently cynical. Creative narratives that skirt around the facts or don't place claims in a fair context just won't fly. When we showed 17-year-old school student Liam a corporate sustainability video narrated by one of its staff members, his scepticism was as biting as it was quick-witted: "Well, obviously he is a well-paid actor".

Understand Liam's doubts, and you begin to see the ironically opaque nature of the word 'transparency' as we currently use it. From hiding information in distant parts of a website, to seemingly innocuous disclaimers on content, there are many ways organisations can convince themselves they are being 'transparent'. But if a business finds themselves using comms to do anything other than address the most significant facts head-on, then in the eyes of Gen-Z, they are greenwashing. Simple.

There is a significant hurdle to jump for some of the world's most recognisable companies. Their reputation amongst this generation — whether deserved or not — precedes them. As 23-year-old university student Alix put it in response to a another video, "I already know this company isn't good for the environment, so it's difficult for me to believe they care about it here." Jumping this hurdle requires taking heed of the high value placed on *true* transparency by Gen-Z.

**YOUR ORGANISATION
SHOULD BE TAKING
ACTION THAT IT IS
COMFORTABLE TALKING
ABOUT IN THE SPIRIT OF
FULL TRANSPARENCY.**

**AND IT ONLY WORKS
THAT WAY AROUND —
ACTION FIRST**

AUTHENTIC ACTION

**THE EQUATION IS SIMPLE:
AUTHENTIC ACTION LEADS TO
AUTHENTIC COMMUNICATION**



Action breeds truth

But most importantly, this group want to see real action. Acutely aware that humanity is living through a climate emergency, they see business as having both the power and responsibility to accelerate positive change. "So many companies place the accountability on the consumer by engaging with micro-actions like plastic bag use, but in fact it's the big corporation that needs to change and will create a larger impact in doing so," 15-year-old school student Olivia N. told us. And she believes communicating about this in the right way can be part of that impact, driving government action, healthy consumer behaviours and partnership across industries: "It's good to advertise it as long as you're following through with what you're saying."

So, the equation becomes simple: authentic action leads to authentic communication. If you want to talk about the climate to Gen-Z effectively, your organisation should be taking action that it is comfortable talking about in the spirit of full transparency. And it only works that way around. Targets, lofty principles or distant goals aren't enough. "It has to be something that's actually happened," Liam concluded frankly when we asked him what he felt companies should be communicating about. Some may see that as a daunting prospect, but the opportunity to create long-term brand loyalty with this generation while powering positive change should be enough to tempt any business into action. Our research shows that a majority (61%) have altered their personal spending habits to reduce their environmental impact, while 23% have bought or sold shares in a company based on its actions relating to the climate crisis. Gen-Z is a powerful group of consumers who are willing to take action in response to yours.



**OF GEN-Z HAS BOUGHT
OR SOLD SHARES IN
A COMPANY BASED ON
ITS ACTIONS RELATING
TO THE CLIMATE CRISIS**

"Now or never"

This conversation is not siloed to climate. The principles of action breeding truth apply to a broader agreement amongst this generation that companies should be taking responsibility for any ethical or social matter that they touch on. Ranking and playing off 'issues' against each other is not their game; instead, they are acutely aware of the bigger ethical picture. But the climate conversation does have a unique urgency and collective interest. 93% of Gen-Z say that the issue of climate change is either 'somewhat' or 'very' important to them, whilst the [latest IPPC report](#) states it is "now or never" to limit the most dangerous effects of warming.

It is difficult to argue against the climate crisis being, if not the most important social issue of today, then certainly the most pressing. Gen-Z knows better than anyone that truthful communication is essential to meeting the required pace of humanity's response.

"SO MANY COMPANIES PLACE THE ACCOUNTABILITY ON THE CONSUMER BY ENGAGING WITH MICRO-ACTIONS LIKE PLASTIC BAG USE, BUT IN FACT IT'S THE BIG CORPORATION THAT NEEDS TO CHANGE AND WILL CREATE A LARGER IMPACT IN DOING SO"

OLIVIA N. 15, STUDENT

AUTHENTIC

GAINING



NOTORIETY



Samuel Hogarth
Magician

Samuel Hogarth is a street magician based in London. He is originally from Chorley in Lancashire, England. Samuel uses authenticity during his street shows, which he believes helps him to connect with crowds and makes his show stand out from the rest.

Samuel credits authenticity as helping him garner more notoriety as a successful magician.

Creating magic

I always knew I wanted to be a magician when I was young, however I only decided I was actually going to pursue a career while studying Law. I was from a small town so I had no idea I could actually pursue magic as a career.

When I realised, I could make a job from it, I gave up studying and started my career toward becoming a magician. What I like about being a magician is I can own my own mistakes. I have the full freedom to make the choices I want; my job is essentially going out and helping people have fun.



AUTHENTIC MAGIC



Watch Samuel talk about his journey of authenticity as a magician

Being authentic in my work

Authenticity to me as a magician ultimately means being true to yourself, if you're not true to yourself you're just lying to everybody! I don't think you necessarily need authenticity as a magician. Uri Geller never actually says that he is a magician but that is what he is, he's a magician. You can package yourself as much as you want but if it isn't you, people will know.

I personally like to be as authentic as possible as I think that is how you can stand out from everyone else; you can take pieces from other magicians and market them as your own, but if it isn't you, you won't stand out from the rest.

I can honestly say that at the end of the show, it is 99% based on whether the audience liked you or not. It doesn't matter what skills you have. They must like you more than what you did for them for you to get paid - and if they feel like they can trust you, only then have you successfully created a connection.

For me, being a magician is the best job in the world. I think any job that is what you love doing is the best job in the world. I choose everything that I do, and it brings me joy to make kids happy and make adults feel a sense of wonder that they haven't felt since they were children and to just briefly make everyone forget their troubles.

Using magic in everyday life

Unfortunately, I cannot tell you any of my magic trade secrets or specific techniques, although practicing magic does require a lot of mental arithmetic. This includes remembering deck orders and certain dates if you wanted to read someone's mind. You would need to recall top lists of a hundred names people would think to remember or certain events, so, those mind palaces. It has become a skill remembering all of those! But what I have learnt through a lot of my performances is about how to engage and connect with people, which I do use in my day-to-day life.

**“PERFORMING AS A STREET MAGICIAN RELIES
ON TRUTHFULNESS AND AUTHENTICITY. AS YOU
HAVE A SHORT WINDOW WITH THE PUBLIC,
YOU NEED SOMETHING TO DRAW THEM IN.”**

Samuel Hogarth
Magician



What does **authentic communication** feel like in practice?

What does it take to bring an authentic voice to one of the UK economy's most important sectors and how does it affect one of the leading voices in the national debate?

Kate Nicholls OBE, CEO of UKHospitality, talks about her experience as one of the most vocal communicators for the hospitality sector in the light of the pandemic.



Liam McCloy

UK Partner &
EMEA Lead for Food
Agribusiness and Beverage,
FleishmanHillard



Kate Nicholls OBE

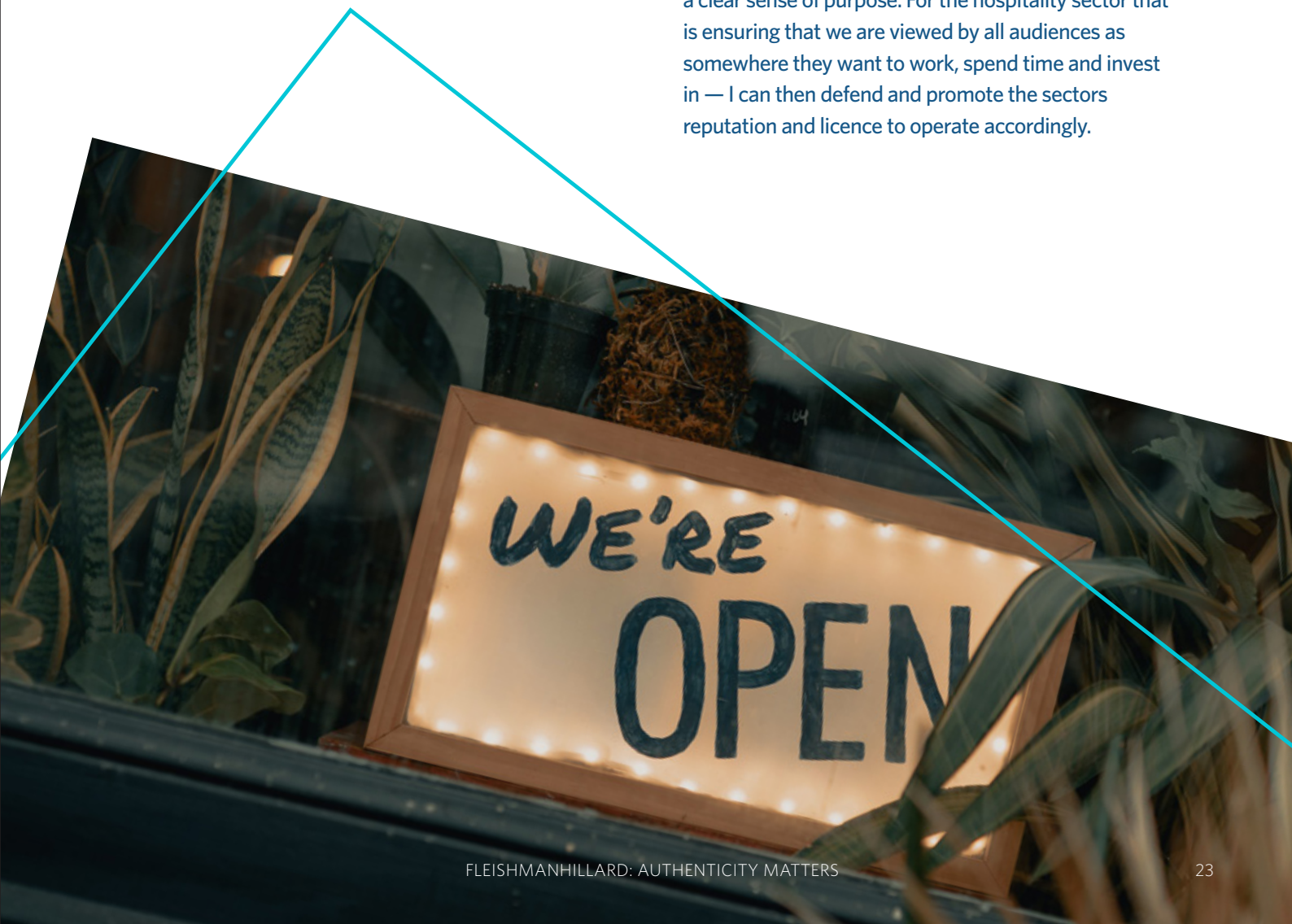
CEO,
UKHospitality

In conversation with Liam McCloy, Partner & EMEA Lead for Food, Agribusiness and Beverage at FleishmanHillard, Kate reflects on how she balances the competing claims on her time and resource from various stakeholders, including government ministers, national journalists and business leaders, while moving at pace. She shares how her communication style has evolved, lessons she has learned and new skills she puts into practice.

Liam: Thinking about all the competing demands on you to push this agenda or that, how do you reconcile these and remain true to yourself?

Kate: The core reason for being a hospitality trade association is to represent the voice of the owner/operator and employer within that sector. So, whatever I am looking at has to pass the 'So what?' test: How is it relevant, in what ways are they affected, how do they benefit? I stress test my perspective and position with all these operators, which are many and diverse in our sector, agree on a shared concern and decide on our focus so I can then represent them and their interests with an authoritative, 'single voice' on key issues to external stakeholders.

I then have to navigate the demands and interests of multiple external audiences including investors, politicians, regulators, journalists, other industry voices and the public. What helps is two things: Firstly, being able to see the wood for the trees and secondly, having a clear sense of purpose. For the hospitality sector that is ensuring that we are viewed by all audiences as somewhere they want to work, spend time and invest in — I can then defend and promote the sectors reputation and licence to operate accordingly.





AUTHENTIC COMMS

How do you connect with your audiences and build trust and rapport with them?

The pandemic necessitated us being in daily contact with the grassroots in the industry, media and government. That was particularly true during the lockdown period and helped us forge strong trusted relationships. This meant we were able to problem solve and work things through in a 'safe space' with nothing leaking to the press.

Now, as we move beyond the pandemic, we are seeking to maintain the quality of those relationships. What makes this possible is authentic communication — where all sides feel able to be vulnerable and to share as much as they can share and be open, honest and frank. If you can nurture and maintain this, then people will want to continue to be in that relationship.

How do you remain authentic as a communicator?

By not thinking about that as an objective. If you try and do it by conscious design, it does not work. I was true to myself because what mattered most to me was helping those in my sector. I've spent my professional life in hospitality and, like the members I represent, I am always there for others whether that's listening to an operator vent their frustration or providing background to a journalist or sense checking something with a politician — these exchanges were often not transactional in nature and I sought to offer that support on an unconditional basis. Also, early on in the pandemic we made a conscious decision that we would do our utmost to leave no one in our sector behind and bring the industry through this together — so lots of the things we did were free for non-members too.

*“Authentic communication
is where all sides feel able
to be vulnerable, share as
much as they can share and
be open, honest and frank”*

Kate Nicholls OBE
CEO, UKHospitality





*“You remain authentic
as a communicator by not
thinking about that as an
objective. If you try and do
it by conscious design,
it does not work”*

What impact did the pandemic have on your style of communicating?

The pandemic meant I no longer had the luxury of time. I had to be 'always on' and be able to think on my feet. I think this applied on an operational basis to businesses in our sector too. Those that handled the pandemic well were agile, able to pivot and brought those who worked for them and with them on that journey through constant communication. I think those are the leadership qualities that people will want to keep going forwards.

In terms of my personal style, the pandemic meant that I had to: (a) trust my instincts and my judgement; (b) use my ability to translate complex issues into simple stories and (c) draw on my command over the detail. I didn't change my style, but the pandemic simply meant I could not over-think or over-prepare things. I started to worry less about the 'what if's' and kept looking forwards. I also had to be more open about what I felt about things. It is impossible to maintain a façade when you are always on the go, and at the beginning of the crisis it was very emotional — it mattered the world to me that 3.2 million people were relying on me and my voice to save their livelihoods. This might sound overwhelming, but I personally found it liberating.

You have been recognised as a leading communicator in our industry and awarded the OBE for services to hospitality, what impact has that had on you?

All of the awards and honours are recognition for the wider team that supports me and helps me stand up in front of journalists and politicians. The team and extended colleagues, friends and families have all worked terrifically hard throughout this period and it has been really tough. That is never taken for granted. The OBE was felt, rightly, by many in our industry as external validation for our industry which I represent and the value it brings and the need for us all to look after it.

The professional recognition also matters enormously to me on a personal level because, as communications practitioners, you all know what it takes to do the things we do day in, day out and to do them well!

Kate Nicholls OBE is the CEO of UKHospitality which was formed four years ago to represent the diverse range of hospitality businesses across the United Kingdom. The association now represents over 740 companies operating around 100,000 venues across England, Scotland and Wales.





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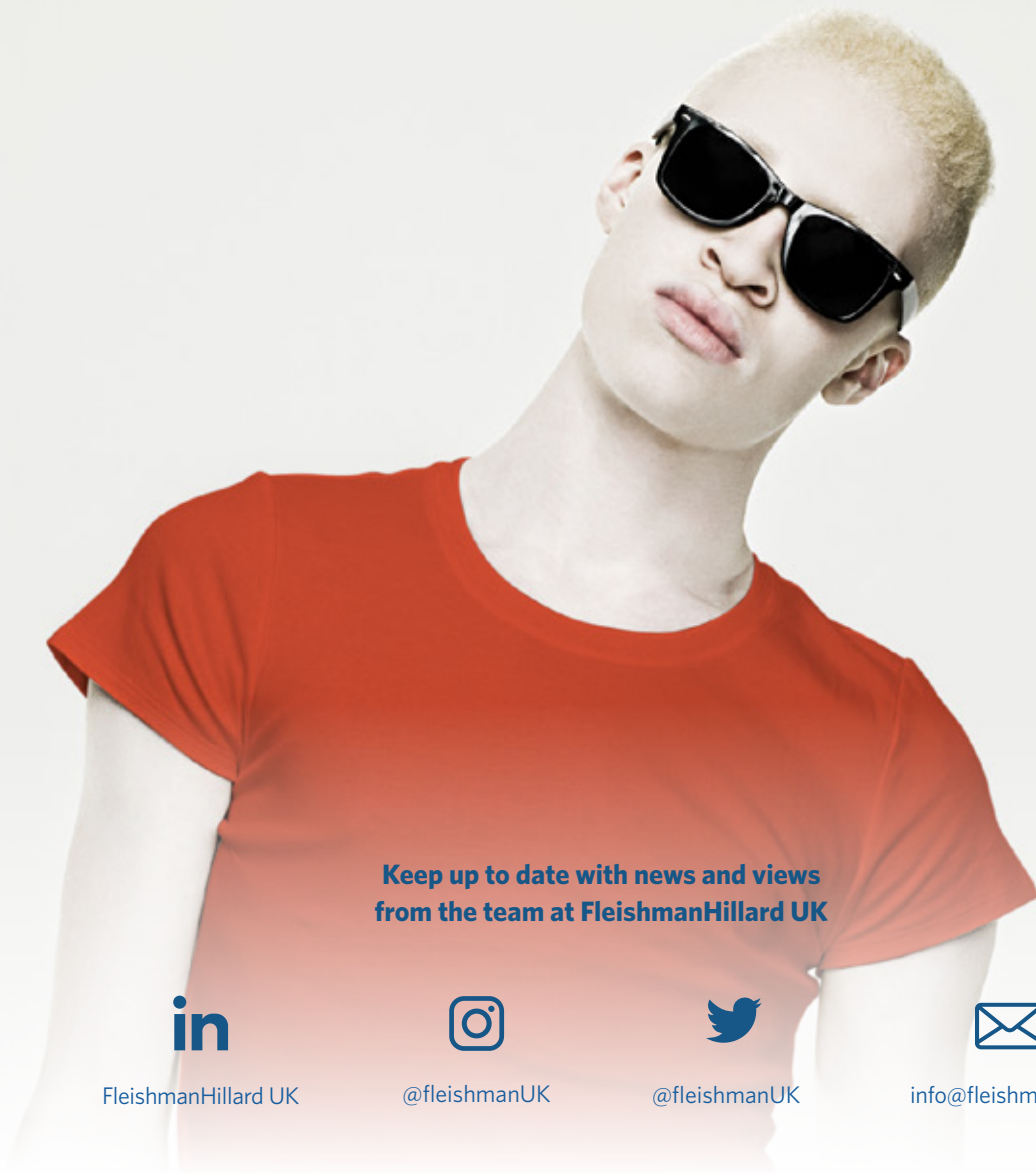
Subscribe to our mailing list to receive
[Authentic Insights](#) straight to your inbox.

In this edition of **Authenticity Matters**, we explore the different ways authenticity manifests. But as we continue to live in an unpredictable world, there is increased scrutiny on what businesses and brands do and say. The societal impact of recent tumultuous years has changed how we interpret 'authenticity' for both consumers and businesses alike.

There are many perils of commenting on cultural or worldly happenings without the authority to do so but staying silent can be just as damaging.

Whether a corporate organisation, Gen-Z or healthcare professional, the brands and businesses effectively connecting with their audiences are those that understand the growing tensions between cultural trends and issues.

Our newest **Authentic Insights** report, which launches in the Autumn, will, for the first time, explore the cultural divides that govern society. And how brands and organisations can view culture as a key driver of protecting and building reputation when dealing with societal issues.



Keep up to date with news and views
from the team at **FleishmanHillard UK**



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