

On originality

Original, genuine, authentic. It seems that these words are nowadays more often used to describe products, cuisines or manufacturing. The connotations are clear and for most these attributes are signs of quality. But how do we look at originality in humans? I would rather like to focus my thoughts on the human aspect of originality and my observations around it.



Let's start with social media and other networks like LinkedIn. How much of the content created is original? Undoubtedly there are quite a few great writers and thinkers out there who are actually thought-provoking, fresh and inventive. However, I believe that we see more content that is simply reproductive. How many forwards do you get daily without a basic context, added perspective or even a simple comment? While I certainly see value in multipliers who share great ideas and valuable information, I do believe that a minimum of effort needs to be made to categorize or contextualize shared or forwarded information. It is difficult enough to distinguish between information, opinion and news (some would add fake news). I would rather appreciate getting to know and understand the sender's relation to the forwarded message, let alone his intention.

While this may not deserve the label of originality, it can certainly improve content quality. I personally have stopped accepting invites on networks that don't carry a personal message which at least makes me understand why somebody is reaching out to me.

Originality would also help in daily interaction and communication. Whether it's business life or a social gathering. It seems that we are often going down the routine lane of communication. Weekly meetings? The meeting agenda is never revised but keeps popping up time and again. Why not try a different format, setting or at least sequence of the agenda items to break the routine and spark originality?

Social gatherings? Even those are often stuck in norm and form. Maybe there is a better way to bring fresh aspects into our communication with family and friends? It could be realized by setting a new theme for discussion, actively asking about views or simply voicing opinions clearly.

This actually leads to my final claim. Opinions are often not shared due to our socialization, hierarchy or other boundaries of communication. I strongly believe that this needs to change. Opinions derive from thought or belief and thus often carry an element of originality. With a bit of behavioral change, we could unlock originality in many people. Maybe it helps to take inspiration from our children who so often have character traits that we miss: Creativity, spontaneity – and yes, originality.

So, wouldn't it be good if we all try to be more real, more authentic? I would certainly be happy if the next time you think about something authentic you don't think about cuisine and the next time you come across something genuine you are not just reminded of a jeans trademark.

Written and published by Nader Kashgari. All rights reserved.