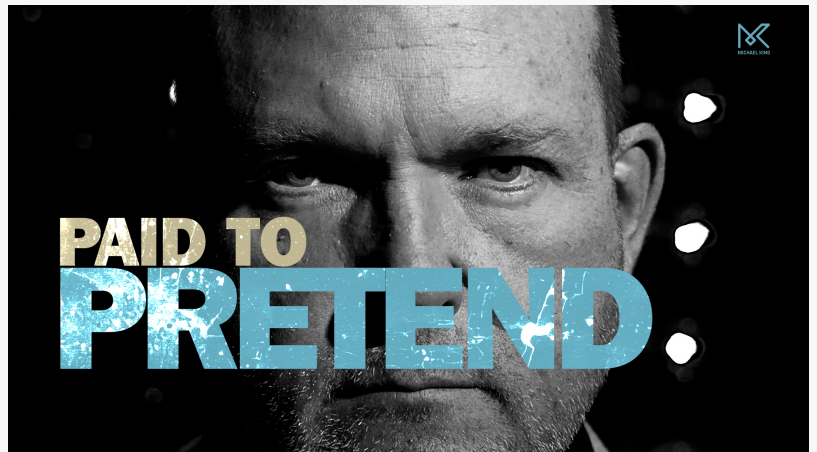


MICHAEL KING RELEASES 'PAID TO PRETEND,' A CINEMATIC CHALLENGE TO THE HIDDEN COST OF PERFORMING AT WORK

Keynote speaker and executive coach Michael King uses original music and film to examine identity, trust and the hidden cost of performing at work.

OMAHA, NE, UNITED STATES, August 25, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- [Michael King](#), a nationally recognized keynote speaker, executive coach and recording artist, has released "[Paid to Pretend](#)," an original song and cinematic leadership film confronting a pressure many successful leaders rarely admit: the pressure to keep performing a version of themselves that no longer feels true.

The film asks a question with consequences far beyond the stage: What happens when the identity that earns approval, authority or success begins to cost a leader clarity, trust and connection? Through original music and cinematic storytelling, King explores the emotional toll of appearing strong while privately questioning whether the people around you value the person or the performance.



Michael King speaking at Sports Philanthropy World, Washington, DC.

Watch "Paid to Pretend" on YouTube: youtu.be/xwsaDC7b6fY

A leadership issue disguised as a personal one

King's central argument is that authenticity is not a soft leadership ideal. It is an operating advantage. When leaders split their public performance from their private reality, organizations absorb the cost through guarded communication, unclear decisions, weakened trust and teams that learn to protect appearances instead of solving problems.

"Paid to Pretend" extends the body of work King brings to stages and executive teams: original cinematic films, live performance and practical leadership strategy designed to help people feel the truth before they are asked to act on it. His work focuses on the intersection of identity, vision and execution, particularly in moments of rapid growth, cultural strain, leadership transition and organizational change.

How the work extends beyond the film

"Paid to Pretend" is part of King's broader examination of identity, leadership and organizational performance. He has brought these themes to national association conferences, corporate leadership summits, annual meetings, executive retreats and companywide events for executives, founders, senior leaders and teams navigating growth, disruption, cultural misalignment or the human impact of artificial intelligence.

His keynote work examines authentic identity as a competitive advantage, the sound of leadership, and the conditions that help high-performance teams translate vision into execution. The presentations combine original film, music, live saxophone, storytelling and practical leadership frameworks.

King also applies those ideas in his executive coaching work through [Teams.Coach](https://teamscoach.com), where he works with CEOs, founders, C-suite leaders and executive teams on alignment, accountability and operating rhythm. His proprietary TEAMS Method™ organizes that work around Targets, Engagement, Action Steps, Momentum and Synergy.

The film and additional background on King's work can be found at michaelkingjr.com.

About Michael King

Michael King is a keynote speaker, executive coach, recording artist and founder of Teams.Coach. Known as the Architect of Authentic Experiences and the Architect of High-Performance Teams, he combines cinematic storytelling, live performance and business strategy to help leaders align identity, vision and execution. King has delivered more than 100 keynotes across the United States and internationally and has worked with Fortune 500 companies, associations, founders and executive teams across multiple industries. He is the creator of the TEAMS Method™ and host of The Level Up Leader Podcast.

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