



THE 10 PEOPLE MISTAKES LEADERS MAKE

MUCH OF TODAY'S WRITING ON leadership focuses on what high-performing leaders should do. That helps from a theoretical and aspirational point of view; yet what really haunts leaders are the mistakes they make. They don't trip up because they are bad people; they most often fumble because of a lack of knowledge, bad habits, or too much stress. The ten most common and, not coincidentally, most damaging mistakes involve interacting with people in the wrong way.

1. Not taking time to bond with people

A leader who is not interested in people on a human level is off to a bad start. A leader who is conceptually interested in others but

doesn't make time to bond misses the mark as well, whether those people are employees, colleagues, customers, or others. Bonding is a deep emotional connection that is different from simply liking someone. In fact, you do not even have to like people to bond with them: However, you do have to get to know them and understand what makes them tick.

2. Being unavailable and inaccessible

Leaders need to delegate tasks; yet delegation should not mean emotional detachment. Leaders who assign tasks and walk away completely hands-off abandon their people. Good delegation relies on continued connection and accessibility. You can maintain a sense of connection by signalling that you

are willing to be available when required, and by creating channels for people to reach you as well as guidelines for using those channels.

3. Not focusing on developing talent

Too often, leaders focus exclusively on driving the achievement of company goals and, in that push, deny the inherent human need to learn. People want to expand their skills and competencies while doing their work and learning is an integral part of achieving results. When you prioritize learning, you become a great leader, a talent hunter, who can spot and develop talent in people who might themselves be unaware of it.

4. Not giving regular feedback about performance

People achieve high performance only if they know the truth about their effectiveness. Leaders often ignore this need and thereby rob people of the key to their future. While tough feedback can be painful, great leaders know how to deliver this pain in a way that transforms it into gain that people appreciate. Develop your ability to convey hard truths about performance and unlock the door to higher performance.

5. Not taking emotions into account

The strongest emotions are related to loss, disappointment, failure, and separation. In fact, research clearly shows that loss and even the fear of anticipated loss drive people's behaviour much more strongly than potential benefits and rewards. Leaders who ignore the emotions of loss and disappointment make a major mistake, which greatly reduces employee engagement. You can make a huge difference simply by being aware of these emotions and showing true interest in that part of a person's experience.

6. Managing conflict ineffectively

Conflicts that are not addressed block co-operation and alignment around common goals. Tension, negative emotions, and polarization build up. As leader, it's up to you to solve the underlying conflict. Your reward is an environment that provides nourishing enjoyment and can build even better and stronger teams.

7. Not driving change

Without change, organizations, like all organisms, wither and soon die. Leaders who don't drive change put their companies in grave danger. People do not naturally resist change; they resist the fear of the unknown

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or the pain that might come with the transition. So explain the benefits that changes will bring and give them a sense of safety as well as the encouragement and energy to explore. In other words, care enough to encourage daring.

8. Not encouraging others to take risks

The human brain is, by default, defensive and risk averse. Yet with intention, practice, and, most important, positive role models, people can shift their mind to embrace risks. The best leaders create enough trust so that others feel safe and supported to take risks and play to win. This is an active, positive way of behaving that fuels change and ultimately achievement.

9. Misunderstanding motivation

Most people are driven by such intrinsic motivators as being challenged, learning something new, making an important difference, and developing their talents. Too many leaders miss the opportunity to capitalize on this internal guidance system and instead focus on such extrinsic motivators as bonuses, promotions, money, and artificial rewards. You will be a better leader when you focus on inspiring people and tap into what they truly desire to achieve in terms of growth and contribution.

10. Managing activities rather than leading people

People hate it when they are treated like cogs in a machine. Yet so much of management is about controlling, administering,

and planning activities and, by extension, people. Leadership, on the other hand, involves inspiring, encouraging, and bringing out the very best in people by building a sense of trust and by challenging them to take positive risks. To be a leader and not just a manager, you need to focus on people as people. That takes time and attention, and takes us back to the basic of bonding — the antidote to people mistake number 1.

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