

Leadership Pitfalls

Leaders spend a lot of time honing their style and ensuring their teams are motivated to work with them. While there are countless resources to improve on the various attributes you utilize both in and out of the office, you also need to pay attention to the pitfalls that may undermine your effectiveness. Josh Linkner, the CEO/Managing Partner of Detroit Venture Partners and a regular contributor to Inc. Magazine and Forbes offers 8 things to avoid.

Violate trust. This goes beyond straightforward lying, which should be a fairly obvious point. You can lose all-important team members' trust by not doing what you say. Don't make promises you can't keep – big or small.

Be selfish instead of a servant leader. You must elevate your team and celebrate each person's victories, not your own. Put employees' needs before your own and do everything in your power to help them help themselves.

Lack focus and flip-flop on priorities. Your mission should be simple and straightforward for your team to follow and accomplish. If you're not clear on goals and a clear-cut, prioritized path to complete them, how should you expect anyone to achieve anything?

Be user "unfriendly." If you're not accessible or kindhearted, or if people have to jump through hoops to reach you for a brief moment, it's inevitable that you'll leave a bad taste with someone. When you're a user-friendly leader, you'll constantly surprise people and leave them with a positive impression.

Deal in fantasy instead of science. You need to have vision and an end goal in sight. However, vision requires execution to make it a reality. You need to track progress obsessively with metrics, so you're able to make real-time adjustments and course changes.

Lack passion and creativity. If you expect your team members to be inspired about what you've set out to achieve, you need to be passionate. If you want your team members to think outside the box, don't just color inside the lines. If you're ho-hum, your team will generate equally ho-hum results. Allow them to unleash their own creativity by setting yours free.

Play checkers instead of chess. As a leader, you need to think a few moves down the board, just like a chess player. Help your team members decipher a sales strategy or what the board of directors will say at the next proposal. Continuously drive the group forward and do so yourself – otherwise you're just playing checkers, which you probably can do in your sleep.

Act as if it's just about what you say. This is the easiest method of all in a downward spiral toward undermining yourself. This is a trap – by phrasing things nicely you might think it's enough. However, in reality, it's really about how you make other people feel. In ten years nobody will remember what you said day to day, but rather the overall impression you left on someone.

What will you do today, this week, or this month to make sure you avoid these pitfalls? What leadership legacy are you preparing to leave?