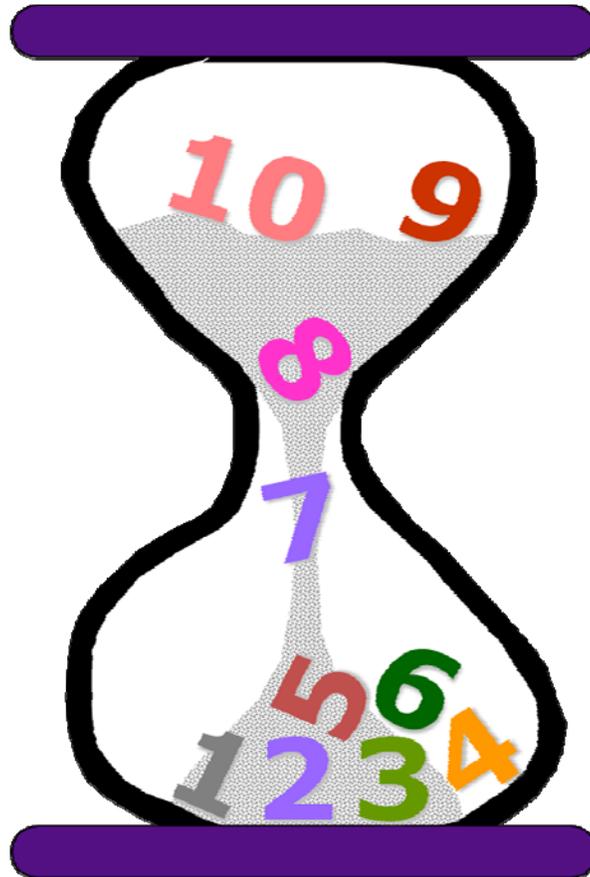


# The 10 Terrible Habits That Undermine Leadership



...And What To Do About  
Them Before Time Runs Out!

Jim Smith, PCC  
The Executive Happiness Coach®



## 10 Habits That Undermine Leadership

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### The 10 Terrible Habits That Undermine Leadership

By Jim Smith, PCC, The Executive Happiness Coach®

**I believe that in today's always-on world, the most critical factor in organizational success is not technology, product, process, or even people – it's Leadership.** Leaders create and maintain the culture that leverages and sustains an organization's unique blend of those other factors to produce better outcomes.

**If leadership is so critical, why is it so often missing? We frequently confuse knowledge with behavior.** Attending a seminar on employee engagement, for example, is WAY different from connecting with your team and working through problem situations.

**Plus, many organizations treat leadership like something that doesn't matter, or assume people will just "pick it up along the way."** Well, it does matter, as you'll see.

#### Leadership Success Flows From Your Workplace Habits

**Anything that you do repeatedly and over time eventually becomes a habit.** Habits range from the simple (e.g. how you walk, stand, sit or take your coffee), to the complex (e.g. how you analyze a problem, lead a meeting, or interact with people).

**Your good habits and behavior got you to where you are today. But what people expect of you changes as you rise in an organization.** For example, that attention to detail was great when you were a solo contributor; but if you still get into the details with every project, you're probably not spending enough time with your team, and they may even be unhappy with your style of micro-management.

**People want their leaders to behave like leaders,** and you may not even be aware of how your once-effective habits are now working against you as you strive to succeed.

#### Why Do We Care About a Leader's Habits?

**Poor leadership habits break the connection between individuals and the organization.**

Outcomes of an unhappy, disengaged workforce include:

- ★ **Disconnected Activity.** People focus on transaction instead of mission.
- ★ **Lower Productivity.** People won't work hard if they feel no one cares.
- ★ **Higher Turnover.** Who stays where they feel unappreciated or disconnected?
- ★ **Increased Absenteeism.** A sure sign people feel disengaged and unhappy.
- ★ **Poor Customer Satisfaction.** Why bother taking good care of the customer?

**Each of these outcomes affects the bottom line.** It costs money to replace an employee (depending on level, between 40% and 400% of their annual compensation); it costs money to lose a customer; and it costs money to pay market rate to someone who is only putting in an 80% effort.

**What people expect of you changes as you rise in an organization**





## 10 Habits That Undermine Leadership

### Habit #1: Hearing without Listening

**What happens in conversation when you hear without listening?** You miss the emotion others hold as they speak. You fail to notice that their words do not match their posture, gestures, eye contact, tone of voice, or speed of speaking. You miss the real message.

**When you hear without listening, all manner of breakdowns occur.** You waste energy trying to solve symptoms instead of the problem. People walk away from your conversations not feeling heard – which leads to confusion, disengagement, and disconnection from you and the job.

**Instead of hearing without listening, you need to align your *intention* to listen with your *behavior*,** as in the following story.

Bob expressed concern about Kevin, who was leading a critical project. “He doesn’t speak up, he’s unimaginative, and he’s just not driving this project the way I need him to.”

One day, while I was shadowing Bob in the office, Kevin comes in to meet with him. And this is what Bob does. He sits on the edge of his chair and leans forward with his elbows on the front edge of the armrests and his hands clasped in front of him (try this yourself, to get a feel for the posture). He meets Kevin eye to eye, about a meter between them, and says, “Go ahead, I’m listening...”

**Now imagine how it felt to be on the other side of that exchange.** What most people say when I demonstrate this posture is exactly what Kevin was thinking: “You’re in my space. I can’t think. I feel intimidated!”

**To be fair, it was Bob’s intention to be a good listener** but while Kevin sensed intensity and attention, he felt that Bob was non-verbally signaling, “Get the hell done with what you’re going to say so I can tell you what I need you to do next. Hurry up!” Kevin was ready to give up.

**To reconnect Bob with his intention, I coached him to adopt a Listening Body,** e.g. “Sit back in your chair, place your feet flat on the floor, and open your hands as though you’re accepting a gift.” He promised to practice.

Two weeks later, Bob says, “I may have to change that assessment I shared about Kevin. He’s coming into work with much more enthusiasm, he’s offering solutions to his problems, and he appears to be more in control of the project schedule.” I ask, “Do you really believe Kevin suddenly and randomly shifted his behavior, with no coaching or input? Or maybe you were so busy waiting to tell him what to do that you never realized how brilliant and eager he already was?!”

**Bob’s experience shows one way you can eliminate this ineffective habit.** It’s not enough to want to listen; you must also care, pay attention on multiple levels, and be in the body of listening to help create a space for others to feel heard.

**It’s not enough to want to listen; you must also care...and create a space for others to feel heard.**



## 10 Habits That Undermine Leadership

### Habit #2: Speaking Without Communicating

While you intend to communicate effectively, you often weaken your message by how you deliver it, e.g.:

- \* **Using Complex Language or jargon.** People will not work that hard to understand.
- \* **Providing too much information.** They tune out the message from overload.
- \* **...or too little information.** They will tune YOU out if you do not offer value.
- \* **Disconnected or conflicting messages.** People need you to weave disparate message threads together in a way that provides context, especially during times of change.
- \* **Poor presentation.** If you lack confidence on stage, people will doubt what you say.
- \* **One-way Traffic.** Lecture delivery without opportunity for Q&A is generally ineffective.

**Poor communication leads to confusion, disconnection, and even hostility.** When confusion is high, breakdowns affect service, quality, and productivity. If the mood shifts to resentment as people worry about “why the boss isn’t communicating with us,” turnover can rise, along with the small acts of sabotage that signal an angry, disengaged workforce.

**Pat was leading one of her company’s highest-profile change initiatives.** While a new reporting structure supported radically new workflow and processes, the division culture was stuck in the old ways, and Pat was concerned that the initiative would fail.

**After meeting with Pat I offered: “I hear great ideas, but many different stories. What’s your vision?”** Well, confessed Pat, that’s still evolving. “How are people to commit to something that’s still unclear?” Aha!

**So we worked to articulate Pat’s vision,** along with her expectations for the new behaviors and standards she expected in this new work system. We culled hours of exploration down to a three-page manifesto that captured all her thinking in one place.

**Next, we held a series of facilitated conversations** with her executive team, then managers, and finally a daylong division retreat at which every person heard the same story and had opportunity to explore and commit to the new expectations.

**With everyone speaking a common language, the new culture quickly took hold – in a matter of weeks rather than months.** Pam and her team earned praise from across the company as their work output has dramatically improved in both quality and volume.

**Most importantly, because she took time to carefully craft and share her message, Pat can spend her time leading rather than pushing from behind.**

**If you want a culture to shift, give people new language to speak & new stories to tell**

**To communicate effectively when you speak or write, you must craft a clear, concise, & coherent message, deliver it with confidence, and invite conversation.** That means you must give priority to How – not just what - you communicate.



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### Habit #3: Doing Instead of Leading

**If you're like most leaders, you started your career low in an organization.** If you began in the mailroom and worked your way up, your early successes were always about DOING a job/task/skill well. Even if you jumped from university directly into a supervisor role, you likely managed front-line associates and served as skills trainer or backup worker during peak times.

**So your historical basis for success was technical competency.** Though you hold a leadership role, the conversation you still carry in your head is, "I am proud of my ability to do X better than others." Stop that! You hired them to do the work and solve the problems -- they need you to provide inspiration, coaching, and Leadership!

**When you hear yourself saying, "I don't have time to manage people," that's a huge red flag that signals misaligned priorities. And the higher you move in the organization, the less I'm going to let you get away with that statement.** Every time I challenge a leader on this "story" and have them write down what they do, there are always items on the list that should be getting done elsewhere in the organization.

*"I don't have time to manage people" is a huge red flag for misaligned priorities*

**Always.**

**When I started coaching Jack, he was stuck in a direct consulting role and unable to achieve Partner status.** To help him bridge the gap between Doing and Leading, we created a visual image of him on an actual bridge. Standing in mid-span, he's holding onto ropes of various lengths attached to either end. He can only hold so many ropes, and in order to step forward and pick up a new one on the Leading side, he must hand off something from the Doing end to someone else.

**The new habit was to constantly question the value of how he spends his time.** Over several years, Jack has ascended to a senior partner role, and now focuses most of his time on creating the right environment for OTHER people to succeed. He's become an extraordinary coach and strategist on a global level. And whenever he comes to a coaching conversation struggling with "where do I find the time for <that>?" we get him back onto that bridge and identify something else he needs to stop Doing.

**So listen to your own conversation.** If you notice you're saying, "I don't have time..." then get up on that bridge and examine what you are holding on to that is keeping you from your most important job: Leading!



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### Habit #4: Avoiding Discomfort

Human beings are programmed to avoid pain. So you postpone that difficult feedback conversation. You delay decisions that might upset people. You take the known, safe path. You resist change and strive to protect the status quo for just one more day...

**When the leader takes the “easy path,” you give permission for everyone to avoid discomfort**

**The problem is, everyone is watching you. When the leader takes the “easy path,” it gives permission for others in that organization to avoid discomfort,** which leads to dysfunction and breakdown in a world where Everything Is Always Changing.

**What you want to do instead: accustom yourself to continual discomfort, such that your “system” starts to recognize it as normal.** As you more frequently step into small risks, incremental change, and prickly conversations, you will find it increasingly easier to tackle the next tier of discomfort: huge decisions, transformational change, and even painful conversations.

Bruce was one of the first leaders to inspire me, early in my career. Bruce was a major introvert – even the *thought* of speaking at an employee meeting caused his heart to race as he broke out in a sweat and a blotchy red rash. But he knew that to ascend in the organization he must master the stage. So he started small. First, he initiated more one-on-one conversations. Next, he met with groups of three to five then began speaking to work groups of ten. Over a two-year period he expanded his comfort zone until he took the larger stage in front of strangers.

**I overcame my fear of speaking by following Bruce’s example, and today I apply a similar process - Micro-Practices – in my coaching.** We break new behaviors down into incremental shifts that are mastered before moving to larger changes. For example, if you avoid discipline, start with short conversations about small mistakes – and notice you can live through the discomfort those create. Then work through gradually bigger concerns until you can say to someone, “We need to talk about your unacceptable performance.”

**Working through discomfort is the secret to lifestyle changes, as well.** Radical diets don’t sustain, but one tiny food shift at a time can keep your discomfort level “under the radar” such that you can shift→shift→shift and transform your life. Going from zero to thrice a week exercise usually fails, but if you start with marching in place for five minutes while you watch TV, you can change your relationship with exercise.

**Figure out what you CAN commit, and start there.**



## 10 Habits That Undermine Leadership

### Habit #5: Living In Constant Crisis Mode

**Leaders who live in crisis mode are easy to spot.** They are always moving. The building is always on fire. They juggle multiple, simultaneous priorities. Their decisions get made at the last minute and delegated work is often an “emergency request” to meet a “last minute deadline.”

**If you live like this, you may be unaware of your habit because (truth be told) it’s such an exciting place to be!** Living on the edge feels *crazy and wild!* You can easily become addicted to the continual adrenaline rush that comes from *living in urgency!* You often get rewarded with more *attention and status!* (And let’s face it: no one gets praised for having toiled behind the scenes to prevent a breakdown).

**The problem is that your adrenaline addiction fosters a constant level of anxiety in your organization.** When you make EVERYTHING important, your staff feels confused about priorities. Eventually, taking care of your emergencies becomes more important than serving customers.

**One of my clients, Gary, was totally immersed in this ineffective habit.** Every conversation I had with him – to which he usually showed up late -- began with a recitation of the ten urgent deadlines he was juggling and blah, blah, blah. Nothing got finished.

**Gary was a Global Sales Director with staff spread across 13 time zones.** Yet he still carried everything in his head, whether for today, tomorrow, or next year. I said, “Yikes, no wonder you are always in crisis!” He was waking up every day already in overwhelm, before his feet hit the floor!

**We started with a simple solution: doing a brain dump onto a yellow legal pad of everything for which he carried responsibility** in his personal and professional worlds – tasks, projects, people, conversations, etc<sup>3</sup>. It took him two weeks.

**Once he captured the data, it was much easier to be objective about what was his to do,** what belonged to others, and what could be dropped. Today, he plans each week to focus on just two or three big items at a time, versus 100+. He spends more time with his staff, who love the calmer, more organized Gary. Best of all, he gets more important work done, at higher quality, and feels a sense of accomplishment.

**Do you live in constant crisis?** Everyone else knows it; it’s time you became aware, too. Your people need you to NOT be in overwhelm, so when they are in crisis they can call on you to help them get through it, not join their adrenaline party.

**Do you live in constant crisis? Everyone else knows it; you need to become aware, too!**

<sup>3</sup> I do not mean to suggest the solution to this bad habit is always time and priority management tools. But I will say that I am continually amazed at how often I encounter senior/executive level managers who still carry everything in their heads. Stop that!



## 10 Habits That Undermine Leadership

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### Habit #6: Forgetting to Deliver On Your Promises

**Notice I'm not saying *Fail to Deliver on Promises***, which demonstrates incompetence. I'm referring to what happens when you, as a leader, lose track of your commitments.

**You promise to do XYZ...and then a crisis occurs.** Your system defaults to your stress response, and you end up doing what you've always done (old behavior). Like Karl:

**Karl's division was many months into a structural and cultural shift to a flatter organization built around self-managed work teams**, where associates participate in every decision that impacts them. Karl was doing a magnificent job of engaging and developing people and honoring the new covenants.

**Then the division received word that a remote office would close six months earlier than planned.** That meant the home office would have to absorb a 50% workload increase, and hire and train sixty people – in just six weeks.

**The management team held emergency meetings to create a plan** and arranged a massive job fair on short notice. About a week after the announcement, I held a coaching conversation with Kyle and asked, "How are the associates reacting to the news?"

**Pay attention!  
Your system will  
default to old  
habits when you  
encounter stress**

**Silence. A long silence.** Kyle's mouth hung open as he was struck by the realization that he had completely forgotten about involving his front-line associates.

**Karl's slip was not intentional.** The reality was that he – and his management team – had risen to success in great part on their ability to make decisions and move quickly into action. The new promise was to involve everyone in a slower, consensus-driven process. But under stress, old habits overrode new intentions, and Karl's autopilot shifted into Command mode.

**Once he remembered his promise,** Kyle did a masterful job of engaging the teams and making them a part of the rapid hiring & training process. He did the right thing.

**How can you overcome your own tendency to forget new promises? First, partner with someone who will hold you accountable to your word.** A partner can be your boss, a peer, a member of your team – indeed, anyone who sees you in action and whom you trust to speak to you honestly. (Shameless plug: a good executive coach makes an excellent partner!)

**Second, pay attention in crisis,** which is the time when you're most likely to unconsciously fall back on old patterns of behavior. When the unexpected occurs, step back, take a deep breath, and ask, "Am I doing what I've always done, or what I'm supposed to do?"



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### Habit #7: Failing to Invest for the Future

During most organizations' annual budget process it seems Training & Development is often the *first* expense item to get the ax. During the year, crowded meeting agendas frequently delete learning topics to give time to the "more important" financial or technical concerns.

**The problem: when you fail to invest time and dollars to develop your own or others' skills, you end up unable to meet the demands of your growing business.** You must recruit more expensive outside talent. You fall behind personally and professionally. And you lose your best employees as they seek opportunity elsewhere.

**Top companies consistently invest in employee development, even in the bad times<sup>4</sup>.** Actually, ESPECIALLY in the bad times – because they know that investing in people pays off in many ways, e.g. by raising skill levels, improving employee loyalty, and building a talent pipeline to staff growth.

**Several years ago I began work with a \$10MM manufacturing firm that had been stuck in place for nearly a decade.** Seven of their top 9 managers were 58+ years old, yet none could retire because they had so few successors! Their long-time austerity focus kept staffing so low that no cross training got done, and outside training was rarely funded.

**They had even installed a state-of-the-industry enterprise software system but they'd "saved money" by not purchasing the training component.** Thus the system was grossly underutilized while 90% of their processes were still done manually. Corporate staff turnover was 40%+ as new hires quickly left when they realized there was no future.

**The CEO, desperate to retire but afraid the company would collapse if he did, engaged me to help the company.** After a series of (emotionally-charged) strategic retreats, the executive team committed to several gut-wrenching changes in their business model, including funding for leadership development and software training, plus a significant investment in foreign business development. Gulp!

**When you invest in your people, the payoff can be huge!**

**Four years later: the payoff is huge!** Every "elder" on the leadership team knows their date of retirement and has a named successor who is training for the role; the corporate admin team has stabilized while doubling productivity; and the company expects up to 20% of future revenues to come from China and abroad.

<sup>4</sup> See any year's analysis of the "Fortune 100 Best Companies to Work For", released in the first edition in January ([http://money.cnn.com/magazines/fortune/bestcompanies/2010/full\\_list/index.html](http://money.cnn.com/magazines/fortune/bestcompanies/2010/full_list/index.html)). While these companies, as a whole, "spend" a great deal in the development of people, their business outcomes consistently outpace companies that spend less on people, because of the investment.



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### Habit #8: Skipping the Follow-up

**Work gets done in organizations through conversation.** You make a request; after discussion, an associate agrees to your request and completes the work.

**What happens next?** When the associate performs well, you think, “They know they did a good job.” So you don’t say anything. And when the associate doesn’t do as agreed, you think, “I’m sure they know they failed,” and you skip that conversation too, assuring yourself, “They’ll eventually get it done.”

**When you skip the follow-up you train your staff to think, “Why bother? No one pays attention.** I’ll just nod when the boss speaks, then get back to my online Scrabble.” How many people in your organization have been “trained” by the absence of feedback to avoid commitments, arrive late to meetings, or deliver mediocre service?

**The Gallup Organization studied<sup>5</sup> the impact of follow-up conversations, and identified three groups: managers who focus on positive, those who focus on negative, and those who ignore their staff.** No surprise that *appreciative environments* lead to the highest levels of employee engagement (61%) and lowest levels of active disengagement (only 1% in such environments will act out their job frustration). But the real surprise is that the ratio in *negative environments* (45% engaged, 22% actively disengaged) is far better than what happens in work cultures where *people feel ignored*.

**When managers skip all follow-up, engagements plummets to 2%, while the unhappy and actively disengaged ratio rises to nearly 40% of the workforce!** So, even negative feedback is better than none at all. It lets people know they matter, while neglecting them can be far worse.

**The solution is to apply the Two Coaching Conversations.** The first Conversation is **Appreciation or Acceptance:** “Thank you for delivering what we agreed upon.” (Simple, easy, takes just seconds...yet how often do you deliver it?). The second of the Two Coaching Conversations, **Course Correction or Renegotiation,** looks like this, “I notice that the report was late. What happened? And when can I expect it?” or “That is not what we agreed upon; let’s talk about this again.”

**In other words, you can improve employee connection and nearly every business outcome** when you pay attention to what people do/don’t do and let them know that what they do matters to you.

**When you skip the follow-up conversation, you “train” people to avoid commitment and deliver mediocrity**

<sup>5</sup> Gallup Inc, August, 2009, *Q12 Meta-Analysis: The Relationship Between Engagement at Work and Organizational Outcomes*, <http://www.gallup.com/consulting/126806/q12-meta-analysis.aspx>



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### Habit #9: Ignoring Your Work/Life Balance

**A few years ago a high profile, globe-trotting CEO went public with the “truth behind the myth” of the high-flying, sleep-defying executive<sup>6</sup>.** He revealed that his total dedication to the job had destroyed his health and his marriage and resulted in a wildly dysfunctional relationship with his teenage children. He confessed to having been “less productive” for several years because his personal life was a train wreck.

**If you put in long hours, take calls on vacation, and attend global teleconferences at 3AM local time,** you may think you impress others with your dedication. But when feel stretched thin and out of balance, you decrease your on-the-job effectiveness; and while organizations expect a lot, they really don't want you to be sick or unhappy.

**You must treat yourself as the valuable company asset you are.** If you invested in a piece of machinery as expensive as you are, you'd regularly shut it down for upgrades and maintenance – so give yourself the same consideration. The truth is that both brain and body require downtime for you to be your best.

**Kate, a marketing director for her company, had hit a creative dry spell.** Fear of job loss had completely destroyed her personal boundaries, so no matter what her boss asked, she said “Yes.” To deliver on too many promises she was skipping both morning workouts and some family dinners. Living on portable food had caused weight gain, and without exercise her bad back created constant pain. She was mentally, physically, and emotionally depleted.

**After I helped her step back and look objectively at her situation, she realized how unhappy she was – and how much that was rubbing off on those around her.** She re-discovered her backbone (literally!) and started to push back on requests that distracted from her core duties. She cut back her hours and rebuilt a workout regimen.

**As Kate came back into balance, her output increased.** She rediscovered her creative mojo. The morale of her team popped back up even as her family life evened out. Best of all, her relationship with her boss improved as he saw her showing up stronger and more confident.

**Are you like Kate, giving your job your all? Let me share a little secret: *Everyone* wants to keep this a secret!** Very few clients start their coaching with a life/balance goal... yet 90% of the time, once we address the most workplace burning issues, the next conversation to emerge is about stress and health. Know that you are not alone.

**Give too much  
+ little self-care  
= less effective  
at work & home**

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<sup>6</sup> *Confessions of a CEO*, Fortune, November 12, 2007



## 10 Habits That Undermine Leadership

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### Habit #10: Believing You Are (always) The Smartest One

**Leaders often are among the smarter people in the room.** But if you believe you are the ONLY smart one, you train your team to stop thinking. You become a bottleneck for workflow and ideas. You deny others the opportunity to develop critical skills. Worst of all, you frustrate your best people.

**Sam was a brilliant strategist, and her promotion to senior VP put her in charge of three new departments.** She'd brought in two creative stars to run her former department, Marketing. I was hired to help Sam and her team identify the cause of the growing tension in Marketing that was bleeding into other departments.

**Sam's version was, "these two do sloppy work. I can't trust them."** One of the team members, meanwhile, said, "I'm good at my job, but Sam won't let me do it. I don't think she trusts me." Hmm.

**I noticed that everything offered by the marketing team was run past Sam before it rolled out to the media...and Sam wielded a mean red pen.** No matter how perfect the team worked to make a new piece, Sam would find a missing comma or tweak a word. One of her managers complained, "If she wants to be a high-paid proofreader, so be it." To cope, the team would intentionally let errors slip, just to let Sam feel superior.

**And they were circulating their updated resumes in the market.**

**To break this habit, lead with questions.** Curiosity helps override your tendency to speak, which leaves you open to hearing the brilliant ideas that others hold. Once Sam realized she was correcting EVERYTHING, she worked to do more asking than telling. As her team saw her letting them make final decisions, they learned to use Sam as a resource rather than resenting her.

**The best bosses are the ones who see their jobs as making OTHERS look brilliant,** who help others feel good about themselves and their work. People will follow leaders like that into the flames!

**When you ask rather than tell, you train your people to think, and you create future leaders.**



## 10 Habits That Undermine Leadership

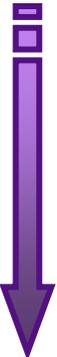
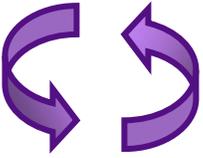
### Ten Positive Habits That Support Great Leadership

Did you find yourself in any of these Terrible Habits? If you want to change your outcomes, adopt some of these **Positive** Habits:

1. **Listen Fully and On Multiple Levels.** Pay attention to words, tone, body, and emotions.
2. **Communicate with Clarity.** Craft a clear, coherent message and invite conversation.
3. **Practice the Being of Leadership.** Let go of doing “tasks.”
4. **Embrace Discomfort.** Start small, and let your system get used to being challenged.
5. **Focus On What Matters Most.** Simplify to have more impact.
6. **Deliver On Your Promises.** Partner for accountability, and pay attention in crisis.
7. **Invest for the Future.** Allocate time and dollars to develop your people.
8. **Let People Know Their Work Matters.** Use the Two Coaching Conversations daily.
9. **Stay Balanced to Stay Effective.** Treat yourself as the valuable asset you are.
10. **Let Others Be Brilliant.** Be curious, ask questions, and leverage your team.

### What’s Required to Adopt More Positive Habits?

A simple, four-stage cycle will help you build new behaviors.

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- A. **Awareness.** The first and most important step is to realize you’re doing something that’s not giving you the outcomes you want. Once aware of an ineffective habit, most people are curious to learn, “What’s a better way?”
  - B. **Exploration.** Clarify what outcomes you want instead. How would you rather behave? What’s getting in your way?
  - C. **Design.** Create an action plan to build the new habit. What will you say? What will you do? When will you do it? The new habit you design may affect how you think or speak, or aspects of how you sit, stand, or move. During the coaching conversation I’ll challenge you to literally “wear” the new behavior -- and tweak it till it works for you.
  - D. **Practice X 3.** To embed a new habit you must Practice, Practice, and Practice some more! When you learned to walk, you tried and fell down many times before you mastered your balance. As an adult, you must repeat (and often fail) a new behavior 100 times before it stops feeling awkward and uncomfortable. After that, experts in neurobiology<sup>7</sup> remind us, you must repeat a new behavior 1,000+ times<sup>8</sup> to embed it in your system, such that it becomes your new Stress Response.
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**Thus, if you practice a new behavior three times a day, you will master it in just under a year.** Ten times a day, and you will master it in a little over three months. There is no Instant On for a new habit, but the good news is that there actually IS a silver bullet – Practice and Reinforcement, to lay down new neural pathways.

<sup>7</sup> *Neurobiology* is a branch of science that deals with the interaction of the body with the brain & nervous system; commonly referred to as the mind-body connection

<sup>8</sup> Heller, Stuart, PhD, 6<sup>th</sup> Dan. (1995). *Retooling on the Run*.

