28 Things Leaders Should Stop Doing Immediately

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Leadership is never easy.

But did you ever stop to consider that your own habits are actually what's making it so hard? Maybe your mindset is causing the lack of productivity. Or, your outlook and attitude is causing inefficiency.

Take a look at this list. What changes do you need to make to your leadership style?

Stop It—Right Now!

Now's the perfect time to audit your leadership habits. If you are doing any of these things, it's time for an immediate change.

1. Doing Everything Yourself

Micromanaging can negatively affect employee morale. Worse still, it strips your leadership of its efficacy. Delegate assignments that can be successfully handled by others. Save your own valuable time for tasks that others can't manage.

2. Setting a Poor Example

As a leader, you will need to walk the walk and talk the talk. You have to lead by example and expect even more of yourself than of your employees.

3. Not Providing Positive Reinforcement

One of the easiest ways to keep your employees happy is by simply recognizing them for a job well done. Recognition is easy and cheap, but will provide a big boost to morale and loyalty.

4. Not Knowing What Motivates Your Team

A common mistake among ineffective leaders is to assume that money is the only factor motivating your employees. There are lots of different factors and incentives which might boost your team's morale and productivity, including flexible hours, telecommuting opportunities, workplace enhancements or even basic camaraderie.

5. Failing to Set Clear Goals

As the leader, it is your responsibility to clearly lay out the team's purpose, direction and goals. If you fail to do so, don't be surprised when your employees simply trod along without really accomplishing anything. After all, how can anyone accomplish anything if they don't know what they're supposed to do?

6. Blurring the Lines Between Boss and Buddy

You want employees to think you are friendly and approachable. This makes them feel comfortable when issues need to be addressed and enables trust. At the same time, being too familiar can lead employees to take advantage of you or fail to take you seriously as a leader.

7. Being Unavailable

Remember in college, when professors would maintain regular office hours to help students in need of assistance? Consider doing the same as a business leader. Make time for your people; employ active listening and connect with them emotionally. Let them know that, at the end of the day, you are just as human as them.

8. Fighting Change

Change happens. Technological change, personnel change, location change – it's just a part of doing business. Rather than being afraid of change, you must encourage your employees to adapt and innovate. How do you do this? By embracing change and innovation yourself.

9. Creating an Imbalance Between Management and Independence

It's important to monitor progress while still encouraging independence and autonomy. Leaders need to create a balanced strategy that avoids micromanagement *and* total lack of supervision.

10. Communicating Ineffectively

You've probably heard this line a thousand times: say what you mean and mean what you say. That's because it's solid advice. When communicating with your employees, convey your idea as clearly as possible. Also, keep the lines of communication open, and let everyone know that they should ask questions when necessary.

11. Shutting Yourself in the Office

Back in the 80s, tech company Hewlett-Packard popularized Management by Walking Around (MBWA). The idea is to increase productivity and employee morale by visiting with people personally, not via email. This opens the door to effective communication and outside-the-box thinking, reveling ideas and input that would otherwise get overlooked. Here are six tips to help start a MBWA campaign.

12. Taking Uninformed Risks

Some amount of risk is necessary in business, but there is a different between taking risks and being reckless. Your employees will lose faith in you as a leader if your approach is too chaotic.

13. Making the Office a No-Fun Zone

Sure, the workplace is a place for…well…work. But that doesn't mean you have to be a buzzkill. Allow your team to goof off every once in a while, and plan occasional activities, meetups and outings to keep things lively.

14. Rushing Through Recruitment

You never want to stretch your team too thin. But even worse than that is filling your team with workers who are simply not a good fit for the project. Exercise discretion in recruitment, and take the time to get to know a candidate first.

15. Firing Too Slowly

No leader likes to fire people – well, at least no *good* However, a good leader also has to have the strength and level-headedness to realize when to let a team member go. Otherwise, they will just drag the rest of the team down.

16. Managing by Boredom

One of the easiest ways to get a point across is anecdotally. Instead of explaining a point in bland, technical manner, try to explain what you can by storytelling. If a manager can tell a story to illustrate a point, that point is much more likely to sink in.

17. Demonstrating Mistrust

There are certain things you can do to show you trust your employees, such as ditching the time clock, not locking every single door, maybe even electing not to use security cameras. Staff will be more enthusiastic and trusting of you if you show trust in them.

18. Not Developing Yourself as a Leader

Getting to a position of power does not mean that you have finished growing. Effective leaders understand that they will never know it all and that leadership is a process of constant learning and growing.

19. Demanding More

It's good to challenge your employees. You will develop a more dynamic workforce, and your employees will realize that they are capable of more than they thought. But don't simply demand more. Unless you plan to offer more, you can't force your team to give more than what they originally signed on for.

20. Managing Instead of Mentoring

Managers tell people what to do, mentors help people make wise and prosperous decisions.

21. Losing Sight of the Big Picture

Sometimes we can focus so much on the details of a plan that we forget about the plan itself. When working on a project, effective leaders will be detail-oriented and focused in the present, but will still not lose sight of the goal.

22. Not Keeping a To-Do List

While we don't want to lose sight of the end goal, we also need to keep our feet on the ground. Remember and track what you need to accomplish on a daily basis in order to arrive at your destination.

23. Rejecting Outside Ideas

As a leader, it's your job to set the course for a project. However, that doesn't mean that only your ideas are acceptable. If someone on the team has an idea or suggestion that is different from yours, take it into consideration.

24. Not Learning from Mistakes

From time to time, mistakes happen. That's just a fact of life. However, they become a problem when we fail to look at those mistakes and learn how to make them one-time deals.

25. Never Taking a Lesson

Great leaders innovate, that's what sets them apart from the rest. But most great leaders don't become great all on their own. They become great by studying the lessons of other leaders. Take a lesson from another leader's success, and incorporate it into your own success strategy.

26. Opting for the Quick Fix

Good leaders fix problems. Lackluster leaders put a Band-Aid on them. In most cases, the Band-Aid is not going to be enough.

27. Getting Overwhelmed

Stress happens, it's a part of leadership. However, you will need to just shoulder it and soldier on. If you freak out, the whole team loses their base of support.

28. Discouraging Experimentation

Team members will sometimes come up with new ways of doing things; for example, a solution for expediting a process, or a unique little twist on a preexisting idea. Never just shut down these ideas because they're not "how things are done."

Changing your outlook and adjusting a few habits might be all it takes to increase the effectiveness of your leadership.

Which of these 28 things are you struggling with the most? Have you already stopped doing one of these things and it made a big impact on your leadership abilities? Sound off in the comments section!

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