



## LEADERSHIP DERAILERS

*The following list reflects some of the common issues which cause leaders and senior managers to lose their way in an organisation.*

**Derailer 1: Reveals things told in confidence.** If you want to win people over, you need to build trust, which means that people have to feel safe and you know that when they come to you with issues and problems you will hold whatever they tell you in confidence. One of the worst things that can happen to a team is for the leader to be an instigator of gossip. As the leader it is your obligation to know what you can share, whom you can share it with, and when is the right time to talk about certain issues. If people come to believe that they can't trust you to hold their confidences, they will withhold information from you, causing you to develop a warped perspective and to lose sense of what's really happening.

**Derailer 2: Plays favourites when managing others.** This derailer again speaks to issues of trust and integrity. Leaders need to be aware of their own biases and make extra efforts to remain objective. As humans we do like certain people more than others. Generally, those people tend to have styles that are similar to ours or feed into our style in some beneficial way. But in order to build a unified team, it's important to recognise that a variety of styles are needed to create a balanced and diversified approach to problems and issues. As a leader, you need to be aware of and manage your own prejudices. You don't have to like everyone on the team equally, but you do have to set standards that apply equally to all and treat everyone accordingly.

**Derailer 3: Manages by using threats or intimidation.** An effective leader knows how to motivate his or her troops without resorting to fear tactics. If you perceive fear is needed for control, you've already lost control and respect. People operating under a fear mentality cannot give their all to their jobs because part of their energy is being used to protect themselves. The worry and stress that intimidation triggers gets in the way of efficiency and productivity, not to mention that people are more committed and willing to go the extra mile for leaders they respect and admire. Let go of intimidating behaviors.

**Derailer 4: Tends to focus on others' shortcomings, rather than strengths.** Play to people's strengths. Research indicates that success comes more easily when people learn how to leverage their strengths rather than focusing all their efforts on developing their weaknesses. As a leader your role is to motivate people by encouraging them to develop in ways that will enhance their own growth. People respond better to positive reinforcement than they do to negative criticism. You'll get better results if you learn how to see both strengths and weaknesses and to frame your communications in ways that encourage and motivate people to operate at their best.

**Derailer 5: Has difficulty maintaining composure under stress.** You are a role model for how you want people to behave. If you can't manage your emotions, why would you expect others to manage theirs? As a leader, any lack of composure, – whether it comes in the form of shouting, or loss of confidence, sends a message that you have lost control. It's your job to balance negative news and stressful conditions with hope for good outcomes and visions and strategies about how to achieve those outcomes. When you lose your composure you send a message that you are not strong enough to handle difficult situations. When you lose your composure the team loses a sense of security and the situation becomes even more stressful for them. Learn how to control yourself by discovering what triggers you and practice techniques for managing your emotions.

**Derailer 6: Takes positions based on self-interest rather than on what is good for the business.** People can spot selfishness and egocentric behaviour and they look down on self-aggrandising individuals. As a leader, your organisation and team should come first. If you want people to follow you and you want to motivate them to meet their goals they need to believe that what you are advocating is beneficial for the organisation and for them, not solely for you. Team members don't want to feel they are simply helping you to climb ladders. They need to know that they'll benefit from their efforts and that what they are doing makes good business sense. Put the good of the organisation and your team before your own ego needs.

**Derailer 7: Demonstrates poor judgement.** In the same vein, team members need to have confidence in you and your ability to assess situations and make good decisions. If they see you continually making mistakes or making decisions that somehow backfire, they will lose their desire to follow you. Employees who watch leaders repeatedly make poor judgement calls begin to lose hope and morale problems eventually develop. You're being paid to use your intelligence to make decisions that produce successful results. As a leader you have more power than your team members and you probably make more money, but if they believe they can make better decisions than you, they will resent your lack of good judgement. Not only will you lose credibility and respect, but you'll push them into a demotivating and despairing space. Find out what's going on that's preventing you from making better decisions.