

Five warning signs your leadership is failing

Good leadership requires self-reflection and a willingness to learn, while bad leadership usually involves one of these five characteristics, according to *Michelle Gibbings*.



It can be easy for your leadership to falter and eventually fail if you lull yourself into a false sense of security that you have this 'leadership thing' nailed. Being a leader isn't easy. The best leaders recognise this fact, and know they are fallible and make mistakes. They understand there's always more to learn and better ways to do things. So what are the warnings signs that your leadership may be going off the rails?

1. You stop being willing to change

It's easy to get stuck in your ways and to see the traits that got you to your leadership position as the skills and capability that will carry you forward. However, in a constantly changing world, success requires leaders to embrace the notion that successful organisational transformation requires not just change for those around them, but personal change for themselves.

Harvard academics Robert Kegan and Lisa Lahey, who have studied why many crucial change efforts fail, found that one of the core problems is the gap between what is required and a leader's own level of development.

They write: "...it may be nearly impossible for us to bring about any important change in a system or organisation without changing ourselves (at least somewhat)..."

2. You see yourself as the smartest person in the room

The downfall of many great companies can be traced to the hubris and arrogance of its leaders. Having a fixed mindset, the leaders close themselves off from feedback and feel they have nothing more to learn. In contrast, influential leaders know they don't have all the answers. They are constantly seeking to push the boundaries, to question, inquire and learn more.

3. You surround yourself with sycophants

While surrounding yourself with "yes" people may make life easier in the short-term, it doesn't create long-term, sustainable organisational outcomes. Seeking out differences of opinion is critical, because it is this diversity of thought or the probing question that aids the adaptive thinking leaders need when facing complex challenges.

4. You refuse to hire people smarter than you

Everyone knows the criticality of getting the right people into the right roles. However, leaders can be uncomfortable hiring people who are smarter than them for fear it will show them up in some way. However, influential leaders look for team members to complement and enhance their leadership and capability. As Bill Gates said, "The key for us, number one, has always been hiring very smart people".

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5. You're the last to hear bad news

When only good news hits your desk, it's time to worry. If people hold off telling you what's really going on, it's a sign they don't trust how you will react to bad news.

It's important to welcome all types of news – even news that is difficult to hear. Not only is your reaction a test of your character, it sets the standard for what happens in the future. So, where would you place your leadership? On or off the rails? *AA+*

