

Obstacles to Leadership Effectiveness

The five critical mistakes to avoid

BY DAVID WAITS



According to numerous national surveys, less than one-third of current workers in the United States are engaged in their work as measured by their involvement, enthusiasm, and commitment. If you simply reflect on your most recent encounter as a consumer at your local retail store, restaurant or government agency, your own experience will more than likely validate the reality of these startling statistics.

Further research tells us that in the U.S., leaders account for as much as 70 percent of the variance of employee engagement. A Gallup study of 7,300 adults revealed that one in two people had left a job at some point in their career specifically because of their supervisor. In order to improve their quality of life, they felt it was necessary to get away from a specific manager.

Effective leadership requires not only doing the right things, but also understanding what not to do. Here are five mistakes to avoid.

CRITICAL MISTAKE 1

Failing to Schedule Time for Learning Conversations

How often do leaders allocate time with their staff to ask questions and listen to their responses? It's not often that we hear about a manager making it a priority. But when we listen, we learn. We also demonstrate that we value and respect what our staff has to say.

Schedule regular opportunities to ask your staff clear, concise and clarifying questions. Then, discipline yourself to actively listen. This will provide you with vital intelligence to implement two of the main functions of a leader, which are to remove obstacles and to provide resources. How can you know the true obstacles that are impeding success and the actual resources needed by your team if you aren't consistently scheduling highly interactive learning conversations?

CRITICAL MISTAKE 2

Failing to Consistently Affirm

One of the most powerful tools to embolden, motivate and energize your team is the incredible power of affirmation. Affirming is simply catching people doing things right and telling them about it.

It's not uncommon for staff to wonder, "Do I matter?" or "Does what I do around here make a difference?" The effective leader is always on the lookout for opportunities to validate the actions of their staff. Take the time to say something about your team member's positive actions. Always tie the positive action you observed to the beneficial business outcome. Become an encourager.

CRITICAL MISTAKE 3

Misdiagnosing

When you visit a doctor, they always asks a succession of questions, and many times follow up with a battery of tests before ever prescribing any action designed to remedy an illness. If important decisions are needed to make your business a healthy and prosperous one, you need to start with a proper diagnosis. This necessitates gathering appropriate and accurate information, much of which can be ascertained by avoiding the first mistake.

Many business owners or executives seek to bring in outside help to treat a problem that has been improperly, inadequately, or incorrectly diagnosed. Before moving ahead with activity, which may or may not produce the desired results, first ask yourself what you want to accomplish. With this question clarified, a decision can be made on what is the fastest and the most effective way to achieve the desired outcome.

CRITICAL MISTAKE 4

Wearing the Wrong Hat

Vision caster. Trainer. Monitor. Cheerleader. Fixer. Disciplinarian. Which hat do you wear? All of them and maybe more! The challenge is in knowing what hat you should wear, and when. If your team is newly formed, it's important to be participatory in your leadership style regardless of the hat you are wearing. As your team develops, your style can shift to a hands-on leader. You then can transition to the role of benevolent dictator, helping your team stay focused on the appropriate action. When your team matures and is highly functioning, your style shifts to free rein leadership as you equip the team to be self-sustaining.

Your leadership flexibility is regularly challenged. Change hats as often as the fluidity of circumstances dictates, and be cognizant of the leadership style required based on the developmental maturity of your team.

CRITICAL MISTAKE 5

Not Taking Responsibility

Let's face it. There are things you cannot control, so stop wasting time and precious emotional energy focusing on those. With the important things that you can influence, stop being passive in your attitude and actions. And for those things that you can control, stop making excuses. Get busy and act!

Avoid these five common critical mistakes and leverage your positive influence as a leader. As you do, instead of people withdrawing, disengaging or leaving, they will passionately follow you. You are the most important element of the success of your team. Remember, your people want you to lead! 🌟



David is founder of Waits Consulting Group, Inc., is an expert in developing powerful initiatives that revolutionize culture. He helps clients create a thriving organizational environment that facilitates rapid growth, innovative development and ongoing profitability. Visit www.davidwaits.com.