



SEVEN COMMON MISTAKES MANAGERS MAKE.....

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Seven Common Mistakes Managers Make

...and how you can avoid them!

INTRODUCTION

If you are a Manager, a Team Leader or a Supervisor (or looking to be one someday) then this e-book is for you!

This e-book is all about helping you to be aware of some of the mistakes managers typically make in the workplace and how you can avoid them in order to step up and become a ***phenomenal LEADER***.

The seven common mistakes managers make are:

1. They manage more than they lead
2. They try to hide their weaknesses
3. They avoid dealing with emotions
4. They fail to deal with the 'tough stuff'
5. They try too hard to stay popular with their team
6. They fail to utilise the strengths of their team
7. They invest on only developing technical skills and not human skills

Let's explore each of these in more detail...

Table of Contents

Mistake 1: They manage more than they lead	4
Mistake 2: They try to hide their weaknesses	6
Mistake 3: They avoid dealing with emotions	8
Mistake 4: They fail to deal with the 'tough stuff'	10
Mistake 5: They try too hard to stay popular with their team.....	12
Mistake 6: They fail to utilise the strengths of their team.....	14
Mistake 7: They invest on only developing technical skills and not human skills	16



Mistake 1: They manage more than they lead

Are there days when all you feel like you do is 'put out fires'?

How much of your time is spent micro-managing staff who, in your opinion, really should just be able to get on with the job?

It is these time-consuming actions that are often the bane of a manager's day, week, month, year... and yet they are part of a vicious cycle that can occur in the role of a manager.

In the past, the role of management has been synonymous with leadership. I believe that in this day and age this is no longer the case. Managers and Leaders have very different focuses and priorities in their roles. It is my position that in our workplaces we are over-managed and underled.

- ➔ Management by its very nature is about controlling the status quo.
- ➔ Leadership on the other hand is all about disrupting the status quo, and even (heaven-forbid) promoting change. Inspiring individuals to make choices and think creatively.

Individuals who are controlled and managed, rather than led and inspired, lose touch with their capacity or the permission to be innovative, use their initiative, and act creatively. Managers fall into the mistake of seeing staff as another resource to be controlled, reigned in and watched. Staff become more like robots who have to check with management before making any changes, before doing anything different.

Managers who manage more than they lead, end up spending more and more of their time managing, and even micro-managing, often with little gain or change in behaviour in the people they are hoping to change. Individuals not only prefer, but are more engaged at work when they are inspired rather than controlled.

Seth Godin in his powerful book *'Tribes'* describes how now, more than ever, people are seeking jobs and workplaces that they **believe in**. To believe in something is to be inspired by its higher purpose, to stick with it even when the going gets tough. Imagine if your team and your staff not only believed in the jobs they were doing, the workplace they were doing it in, but they also believed in you, their leader. What an amazing team environment that would be!

People want to be led, they want to be inspired, valued and they want to believe in you and to belong to your tribe. It is through being led that individuals aim for, and move towards, their potential greatness. It is possible to lead more than to manage, and to inspire a group of individuals to achieve excellence and greatness in any area of work.

Does this mean that we throw out the principles and the role of management at work? Not at all!

But remember that it is the processes and systems that need to be managed; you will get the best out of your staff, out of those around you, when you lead and inspire more than you manage.

How you can avoid making this mistake:

1. Your capacity to inspire others through your leadership is directly related to how inspired you are personally. Tap into those things that inspire you. Read more, find out more about leaders who you admire, surround yourself with people who inspire you.
2. Develop your leadership skills through engaging with a coach or a mentor who can inject you with inspiration and leadership skills
3. Balance your capacity to control with your capacity to inspire, influence and lead those around you.

Mistake 2: They try to hide their weaknesses

There is a perception in business that managers need to be strong, stoic, and successful in every circumstance and situation they face. We almost believe that managers need to 'get it right' all the time. The problem with this approach is that it is inauthentic to believe that you always 'get it right' and are good at everything.

The reality is that some of the best CEOs and the strongest leaders today are those that show both their strengths and their weaknesses. Great managers and leaders know what their weaknesses are and openly share these with those around them (thus giving others permission to be honest about the things that weaken them too). Their power is their capacity to share and display humility, to show their vulnerable underbelly.

In their book *'Strength in Leadership'*, Tom Rath & Barry Conchie mention research undertaken by the Gallup organisation, which found that there are no real qualities that all successful leaders have in common. The only thing that phenomenal leaders have in common is that they know exactly what their strengths are and they work within these strengths as much as possible. In their areas of weakness instead of trying to be all things to all people, they are authentic about those areas and set in place strategies, people and processes to help them mitigate these weaknesses.

If you put in place such mitigation strategies, individuals in your team will respect you more, will trust you more, and be more likely to be honest with their own areas of weakness. Would you rather have a team member who was poor at dealing with conflict bumble their way through a volatile situation? or would you rather have someone who was honest with you, and with whom you could help to best deal with this situation proactively, rather than reacting to the fall-out?

Know what you are great at, work within your strengths, and be authentic about those areas that you are not great at in your work.

How you can avoid making this mistake:

As a Manager and a Leader it is important to spend the time clarifying what it is that you are great at. To help you with this, list below five aspects of your role that are strengths to you (activities that make you feel **strong**):

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

List below five aspects of your role that you dread doing, things that you put off until the last minute, that you avoid (activities that make you feel **weak**):

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Aim to spend more of your day working within your strengths. Be open and honest about your areas of weakness and instead of hiding them, find ways to mitigate your weaknesses. The best mitigation is to find people who are good at those things that you are not and to partner up with them.

Change Works have a number of tools and assessments, and can support you to explore what your personal passion and strengths are through individual coaching and mentoring. Contact Change Works on info@changeworksweb.com to talk about how we can support you to become a phenomenal and authentic leader.

Mistake 3: They avoid dealing with emotions

Managers who fall into the trap of only dealing with facts and figures work hard to remove emotions from the decisions and choices they make. The problem is that this hard work to 'not allow emotions to get in the way' is frugal and near impossible.

The reality is that it is not possible to ignore emotions and emotional content when making decisions. Emotions (ours and others) are part of every decision we make, a part of every conversation and interaction we have with others, whether you recognise it or not.

Rather than avoiding, suppressing or trying to 'manage' emotions, it is critical that managers learn to acknowledge, accept and utilise the information provided by emotions to their advantage.

Developing your Emotional Intelligence (the intelligence of being able to be aware of, manage and use emotions effectively) is a key aspect of successful leadership. In fact, according to Daniel Goleman, Emotional Intelligence accounts for 85-95 per cent of the difference between mediocre managers and effective, successful leaders.

Consider the best managers that you have had throughout your working career. What are the key qualities that stand out about them, the qualities that made them great at their job? Now, I would hazard at a guess that the key qualities that come to mind for you are not their capacity to balance a budget, or their expertise with spreadsheets or rostering. Instead some of the qualities of great managers that come to mind may be:

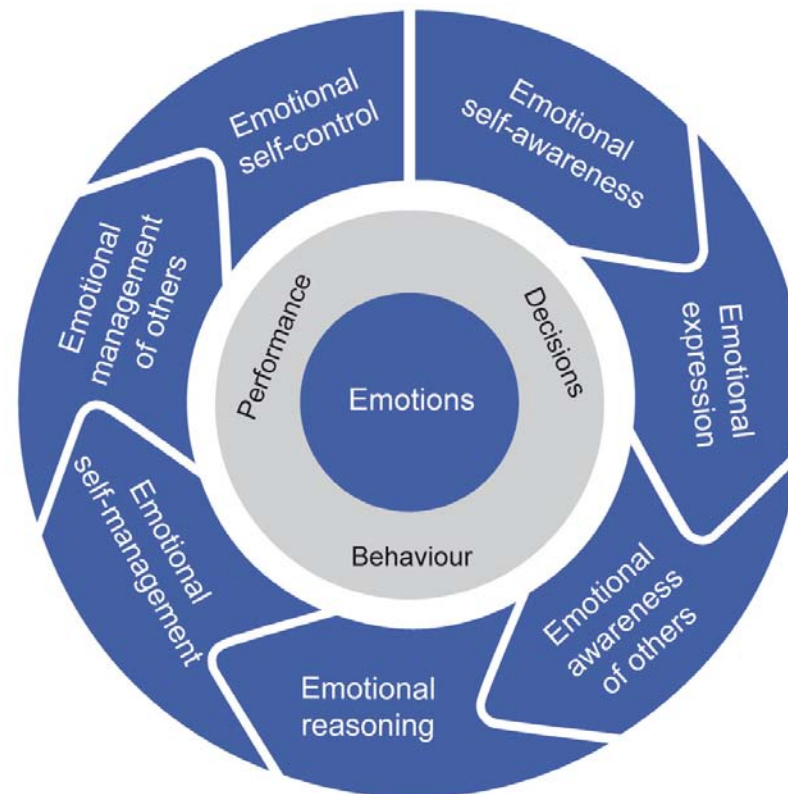
- They are approachable
- They care about others
- They make decisions that are fair etc.

Often the qualities that stay with us about great and effective managers are connected with their capacity to tap into their Emotional Intelligence, to connect with others, to manage their own and others emotions and to make decisions that are fair and take into account the impact on others.

How you can avoid making this mistake:

To become a great manager and leader it is essential to not avoid, suppress or 'manage' emotions, but instead to accept that they are a reality in your decision-making process. In order to better harness emotions seek to develop your Emotional Intelligence and use this as a basis for success at work. Regardless of how successful you are at dealing with emotions at work, you can always develop your capacity to do this better.

Change Works assist individuals and teams to enhance their Emotional Intelligence through exploring the seven skills of Emotional Intelligence as outlined in the following Genos Model of EI (www.genosinternational.com):



Mistake 4: They fail to deal with the 'tough stuff'

If you are a manager and a leader, then at some point you will be confronted with a 'tough' situation at work and will face the task of making a hard decision. I'm guessing that you have probably been faced with such a situation already. Whilst this is an inherent part of the job, there are many managers who avoid making the hard decisions and confronting the 'tough stuff'.

The real tough stuff may be having a conversation with a team member who has a great work output, but doesn't get along with others in the team. Or, it could be someone within the team who is socially fantastic and is a friend to many, but has some technical issues within their work that needs to be addressed.

Whatever the 'tough stuff' is for you, it is essential to not fall into the trap of avoiding these situations or conversations all together. Burying your head in the sand and using avoidance is not a sound strategy. It reinforces undesired behaviours and may precipitate further problems.

By its very nature, addressing issues that you would rather avoid is not easy to do. Often it is not easy because you are dealing with human beings who are complex, emotional, and may be unpredictable. The problem is, that it only gets harder if you do not have the necessary human skills to make the process work. Individuals crave and respect Managers and Leaders who step up to the plate and ultimately deal with the tough stuff.

One of my mentors, Michael Grinder, defines leaders as...

'those who have an ability to breathe through a crisis'.

I love this definition as it conjures up an image of great stoicism and courage in a storm. Leaders who use courage in their decisions and stand by their convictions are often well-regarded. Courage is a skill that can be practised, developed and harnessed, and coupled with humility (having the courage to be real and admit mistakes), is the mark of a true leader.

How to avoid making this mistake:

1. Do it! Even though it may feel uncomfortable by not addressing or dealing with the key issues as they arise, they can grow and become bigger issues than you had ever initially imagined.
2. Role model the behaviours you want to see in your staff. Teams reflect their leadership and this is never more evident than through the process of dealing with tough situations at work. Have the courage to make the changes you want to see in others. If you want individuals in your team to be 'stepping up to the plate' and using their initiative, make sure that you are doing this in your own role.
3. Be honest. When employees ask questions then provide them with the best answer you can. Be comfortable with saying "I don't know". Honesty will always be appreciated more than secrecy.
4. Challenge the behaviour whilst maintaining respect for the person. It is possible to separate a person's behavior from who they are. This subtle change in language can have significant impact to seeing the behaviours you wish at work.

For example, if you were to address a staff member who was arriving late to team meetings, instead of saying, 'you need to be more punctual', you might say, 'I always value your contribution at our team meetings, but your behavior of arriving late is not acceptable within this team. It is important to me and the team that you arrive on time so that we can start the meetings together'.

Darren and Alison Hill have written an insightful and useful book titled 'Courage as a Skill', which explores strategies to develop courage in all aspects of your life. To purchase a copy of this book check out the Online Store at www.changeworksweb.com.

Mistake 5: They try too hard to stay popular with their team

One of the critical mistakes that are made by managers is that they prioritise staying popular (or becoming popular) with the members of their team. Have you ever worked for a manager who seems to step over this boundary in order to be 'liked' by everyone, who buys into the office 'chit-chat' and gossip, who aims to be 'chummy' with their team?

There is a strong temptation to 'be one of the team', to stay popular with individuals whom you are managing, particularly if you are someone who 'likes to be liked' (which we all do to different degrees). The problem with this approach is that there is an inherent power imbalance in these relationships. The very nature of being a manager is that at some point you will be required to manage the performance of the team members, you will be held accountable for mistakes that individuals in your team may make, and you will be asked to strengthen collaboration amongst all the team members.

The other problem with this approach is that it is often difficult to be 'popular' with everyone. Someone at some point will get their nose out-of-joint and see your behaviour as favouritism and therefore unfair. One of the key skills of effective managers and leaders is their capacity to remain fair and equitable with all individuals in their team and in their decisions. It is this principle which underpins every anti-discrimination legislation and codes of conduct policies and procedures ever written.

Initially, these comments might seem like a contradiction to other points I have made about how important it is to engage and connect with your team. The difference between pursuing popularity and pursuing engagement is the intent behind your approach and what you are focusing on. If the focus and concern is on self, then popularity and acceptance will be pursued, but if the focus is on others and inclusion then engagement is pursued.

Making popularity more important than fair and transparent relationships is a false goal and one which will not stand the test of time. The long-term win is in achieving genuine relationships, not the popularity stakes.

This leads to another interesting point: leadership is often a lonely role. Managers are often caught in the middle between senior management and their team, both with demands, values, goals and expectations which can sometimes be competing. At some point in your relationships you will be asked to make a choice between giving a popular message to the team, or in delivering a less-than-popular decision to the team due to senior management or organisational decisions. Managers and leaders can feel pulled in both directions, with limited people to turn to and consult in this tug-of-war. The saying 'it's lonely at the top' may ring true for you.

How can you avoid making this mistake?

Rather than solve this loneliness problem by trying to be 'one of the team', it is important that managers seek other strategies to resolve the isolation of their role.

Some ideas to help you with this include:

1. Satisfy your relationship needs by connecting with colleagues at the same managerial level (both within and outside of your workplace)
2. Maintain professional, fair and equitable relationships with all team members
3. Network with other professionals and Managers
4. Don't buy into gossip, instead stand for transparent communication
5. Engage in external coaching/mentoring relationships to bounce off ideas

Mistake 6: They fail to utilise the strengths of their team

Individuals in your team have job descriptions that they are employed to carry out and by which they are held accountable. The move in the work environment towards multi-skilling and having staff being able to work across a range of different tasks and areas has issues. The problem with this approach is that it does not always allow for individual differences and preferences that exist. It also asks individuals to strive for a generic all-round contribution rather than seeking to excel in a particular aspect of the work, the aspect that they love.

The reality is, that your team is likely to be under-resourced. There are talents, strengths and capacities within the team that are not being tapped into. Resource the talents and strengths of your team and you will see employee engagement increase. Workplaces sometimes allow small windows of opportunity for this but then ultimately insist that employee's return to their pigeon-hole and deter anyone who sways from this (either explicitly or implicitly).

Identifying and resourcing the strengths of the individuals within your team is an important role of a phenomenal leader. Take for instance two individuals who love their work as accountants. The reality is that they are likely to love (and therefore have strengths) in different areas of retail work. For example, one may love working on the merchandise and store display (Charlie), while the other (Shauna) may love meeting new customers and assisting with fashion choices. In a team setting it makes sense to utilise the strengths of these individuals in the roles that they take on for the team. Store layout and merchandising should be overseen by the Charlie and customer liaison should be coordinated by Shauna.

I would encourage you to focus on strengths in your discussions with your team members. Ask them what aspects they enjoy about their work, find out what roles make them 'buzz'. You will notice your team light up when they talk about the work that they love to do and this will be an indication of their strengths. Imagine if they were doing the tasks they loves more often in their day? What affect could that have on the rest of the team and ultimately on your customers and clients? I guarantee you, that's a workplace I would be eager to get into!

How to avoid making this mistake:

1. Talk about strengths. Make this language part of your everyday vocabulary with your colleagues, thereby giving them permission to openly talk about their own strengths
2. Ask! Find out what activities or aspects of a person's job makes them feel strong, what do they love doing
3. When you have some ideas about the strengths of the individuals in your team, start to talk about how you can utilise these strengths to achieve the goals of the team and organisation
4. Support individuals to explore and identify their own strengths. Gaining the support of external consultants for this process can be beneficial
5. And finally, use strengths-based language when talking with your team. See their strengths, see their potential. If you believe in their capacity to change and improve they will begin to reflect this. Never is it more true that you find what you are looking for, choose to look for strengths and you will find gems you never knew existed!

Mistake 7: They invest on only developing technical skills and not human skills

In every job there are two sets of skills utilised by employees:

1. The first set of skills are the **technical skills**. These are the skills required to be able to do your job. For example, the technical skills of an accountant might include being able to use spreadsheets, keeping up-to-date on the latest taxation changes and laws, having an in-depth knowledge of business structures and bookkeeping requirements.
2. The second set of skills in every job are **human skills**. These are the skills required to work with, interact with, and engage with other human beings, from customers, clients, colleagues and stakeholders. How well you utilise these skills can make an exponential difference within your team and organisation. Imagine the accountant who might be technically brilliant at what they do, but when it comes to dealing with customers they are rude, arrogant and impersonal. I would hazard at a guess that they would not be in business for long.

Many managers and leaders inherently understand the importance of having good 'human skills' for both themselves and their team. And yet how many actually invest time and money into building, developing, enhancing and maintaining high quality human skills? And when it does occur, often it is only when the technical training has all been completed...and only if there is money left in the budget to be spent.

In a short survey we conducted with HR employees, we found that the central issue that was of greatest cause of concern in the workplace was **communication problems**. It wasn't that staff didn't know how to do their job, it wasn't 'I wish they could balance a budget better', it was the key fact that there were interpersonal problems predominantly caused by poor communication between people. This is a critical human skill and one that requires continual focus and development in order to address.

We have worked with a range of teams and it is my experience that those teams who prioritise and focus on developing the 'human skills' of their team and staff reap the benefits of motivation, engagement and better communication.

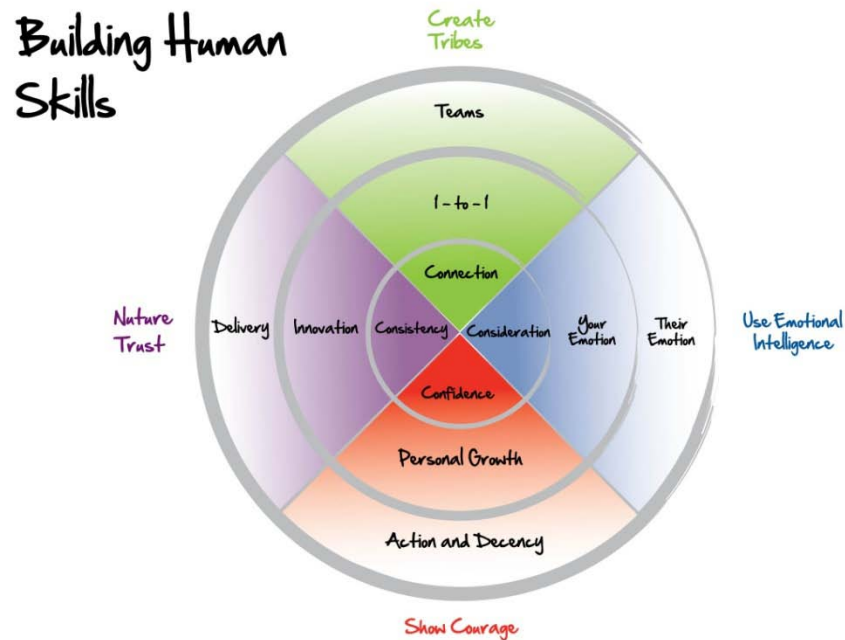
How you can avoid making this mistake:

The answer is simple, make investing in developing the human skills at your workplace a priority.

We at Change Works have developed a model that can assist you and your team to build your 'human skills' aimed at achieving the following four key outcomes:

- Building Tribes
- Using Emotional Intelligence
- Showing Courage
- Nurturing Trust

Contact us on info@changeworksweb.com to find out how you can continue to develop these skills.



About the Authors

Darren Hill



Darren is a specialist in building the human economy in organisations. Darren works with forward thinking organisations and individuals prepared to create a legacy and are driven to achieve results immediately and sustain them for the long term. Darren mentors, coaches, and trains people on the “not-so-soft-skills” of being human – he teaches people how to build reputation, collaborate better, step up in innovation, and how to be more inspired and inspiring. With a background in human behavioural sciences, Darren helps people to face their fears, push through their weaknesses, acknowledge their strengths and see their possibilities by providing insight, support, and challenge in every program, talk, presentation, coaching or mentoring session he conducts.

Darren is a Thought Leaders Mentor, Keynote Speaker, Trainer, Consultant and Author.

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Alison Hill

Alison's extraordinary listening skills changes people's lives. A psychologist who has a wealth of experience as a trainer and facilitator across a range of topics, she is a nationally accredited trainer for the *Beyondblue* Depression in the Workplace Program. Alison's ever-present empathy and compassion ensures that she works very closely with individuals to build relationships and achieve results. It is Alison's personal quest to see workplaces progress from reactivity to pro-activity in all areas of culture-building, health, well-being, and motivation. Contact Alison at Alison@changeworksweb.com.



Husband and wife team, Darren and Alison are Directors of Change Works: *Forward Thinking Experts*.

Subscribe to their e-letter and find out more about what they do by visiting: www.changeworksweb.com