

10 Sure Fire Ways to Fail as a Manager

by Terry Paulson

In an effort to be less than constructive as a manager, here are ten sure-fire ways to alienate and demotivate your team on your change journey. Hit-or-miss approaches don't go far enough; this is your chance to use the best methods of corporate torture and humiliation developed by dictators, steamrollers and other "tough guy" bosses.

1. Never give in to selling any change when you can exercise your power by demanding it. Demands keep staff in their place-down there somewhere. Tact and frequent communication does to authority what sugar does to teeth. You wouldn't want to rot your teeth; you wouldn't want to spoil your team. After all, if any of your people had any ideas worth listening to, one of them would be the boss.

2. Develop a varied arsenal of "looks" to master the subtle put-down. A well-placed sigh and a "that was dumb" stare can work wonders in silencing your people. Add the verbal clinchers: "Are you kidding?" or "Do you really think I'd do that!" Try well-placed sarcasm: "Yeah, I knew I'd have this problem when they made me put you in this position!" When they react, just say, "Can't you take a joke without overreacting like most women do?"

3. When providing performance feedback, don't let them find their own solution when you can reinforce your position of authority by telling them what they "obviously should have done!" Take them to the stone tablets enshrined on your office wall to show them the error of their ways. Be ready to use the Harvard Business Review, your MBA notes, or Dilbert cartoons to identify how defective they really are.

4. Never deal with issues when you can attack the person. When they criticize your ideas, question their attitude and commitment to the team. When they miss a deadline, question their ability to handle responsibility. If they persist in making their point, keep them in their place by saying, "If I wanted your opinion, I'd give it to you!"

5. Keep harping on the phrase, "More with Less" to explain your downsizing, reorganizations and cost-containment initiatives. Busy people are happy people whether they want to admit it or not. Don't let your need to hold the line on wages to impress stockholders stop you from taking the wage increases and bonuses you deserve for leading your team through such perilous times.

6. Never give information or strategic direction until you have to. Once you do, never change your position. Now, if their ideas are really better, just wait a few weeks, make some slight adjustments, and then claim them as your own. They will squawk in the restrooms and lounges, but they will know what it is to respect authority.

7. When things go wrong, you know who to sacrifice. When you're given a bunch of turkeys, how do they expect a leader to get them to fly? Never tarnish your reputation as a change agent when you have inexperienced, marginal team members to blame. If by chance your team does succeed on its own, take the credit. After all, with effective leadership even turkeys can fly in unison for 50 feet.

8. Build your own corporate torture chamber adapted to the needs of your trouble-making staff. Know how to schedule hours to produce maximum aggravation. Keep the pressure on by making them work with team members they hate and projects they have no skills to draw on. When they are in the "dog house," let them know it is not supposed to be fun.

9. Never give recognition; it sets the stage for complacency. After all, they are lucky they have a job. If you thank them, all they do is ask for more money. In this century of never-ending change, there is no place for a "good guy" on your corporate juggernaut!

10. Bark is only as good as a bite. Fear is a great motivator. Don't waste your time with petty, lengthy documentation with your tough employees; make a scene by threatening their job on-the-spot. Sure, you'll lose a few, and don't worry about lawsuits. If you abuse them privately, there will be no witnesses and it's your word against theirs.

With these helpful hints, as a boss bent on failure, you can be sure to arrive there. You'll know if it is working. On the surface, people will appear to work. You will get compliance when you are in sight. You may find they work slow, make many errors, and have no concern for quality or customer service, but at least you know you will get the minimum. You will be butchered at the drinking fountains and in the lounges, but don't let petty gossip get in your way. You will feel lonely, but that goes with creating the illusion of power. They will have a going away party when you leave. Unfortunately, you will not be invited to the party. By the way, the Surgeon General warns that using these hints may be hazardous to your management career and a disaster to the team and organization you serve.