



Top 6 Ineffective Leadership Traits

By Judy Ringer

Even the most effective leaders lose their way occasionally. In spite of best efforts, you forget how much influence you have and how your action (or inaction) affects the workplace. These six traits are common causes.

Ineffective Leadership Traits

1) Avoiding Conflict

When you avoid conflict, you give away power. **Don't be afraid to bring up the hard topics. Face them and invite others to do the same.** In a small business I coached, management consistently avoided dealing with chronic lateness. Frustrated employees turned on each other, groups polarized, and customer service suffered. **As soon as the leader began to hold the conversations he'd been avoiding, behaviors changed** and employees relaxed, knowing the right person was in charge.

When you don't hold others accountable, you allow unacceptable behavior to continue. People need leaders. And one of your primary functions is to facilitate the energy of conflict.

2) Fostering Unhealthy Competition

Conflict is one way in which teams get to know each other and understand goals, roles, processes, and preferred ways of interacting. **Managed well, conflict can encourage previously unheard voices, new ideas, and sustainable solutions.** However, using hidden agendas and subterfuge to create interpersonal conflict will hurt you and your team. **When you promote unhealthy conflict, you abuse power.** Effective leaders foster trust, respect, and openness.

3) Seeing Only What's Wrong

When your quest for excellence and continuous improvement is uppermost, **it's easy to focus exclusively on what isn't working.** Whether giving individual or team feedback, **start with what is working.** One of the best teachings from *The One Minute Manager* (Blanchard and Johnson) is how easy it is to notice and give positive reinforcement. **What you look for is what you get. Focus on what's working, and you'll get more of it.**

4) Taking All the Credit

We live in a competitive culture and appreciate rave reviews. Unfortunately, this competitive bias can cause otherwise well-intentioned leaders to miss **the real gold that derives from sharing credit: team building, mutuality of support, and a healthy workplace.** The good news: it's easy to do:

- Offer praise wherever possible.
- Encourage new ideas by acknowledging them.
- In team meetings, listen actively and validate what people are saying.
- Continually seek to give credit to others.

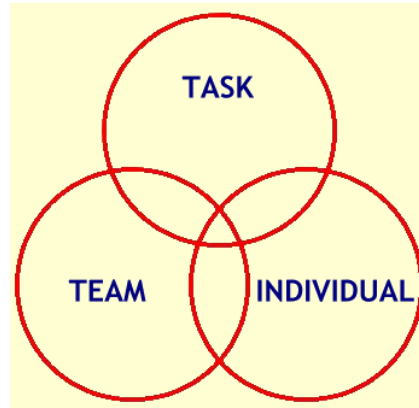
The more credit, praise, and acknowledgment you give, the more you get.

5) Controlling Everything

Even for great leaders, this is one of the hardest ineffective leadership traits to manage. **Your job is not to control. Your job is to lead and inspire.** Use your power to delegate responsibility and foster team problem-solving. **Give employees time and opportunity to develop their own projects and solutions.** In his book, *Drive*, Daniel Pink speaks of the power of Autonomy, Mastery, and Purpose as performance motivators in the 21st century organization. The Australian software company Atlassian gives employees 24 hours of autonomy every quarter. This one day has led to innovation and engagement throughout the company. Similarly, Google invites engineers to focus 20% of their work time on creative projects. Two outcomes: Google News and gmail. Give your people autonomy wherever possible.

6) Focusing Exclusively on the Goal

In the 1970's, John Adair developed a simple three-circle model for leaders at Sandhurst Military Academy. The three circles: **Task, Team, and Individual**. While your priorities might require focusing on a specific circle for a time (task, for example), **powerful leaders keep all three circles in mind.**



1. **TASK:** Are we accomplishing the goal we set out for ourselves?
2. **TEAM:** Is the Team working well together?
3. **INDIVIDUAL:** How is each individual doing in his/her path?

To keep from becoming too task-oriented:

- Do periodic team check-ins.
- Set aside time for activities that help people connect on a deeper level.
- Meet with team members individually.
- Focus on tasks AND relationships.

When you find yourself stuck...

... ask if one or more of the six traps are keeping you there.

Now it's your turn!

- What ineffective traits are you particularly practiced in?
- Are there other ineffective leadership traits that have gotten you into hot water?
- What are they?

Additional Resources

Visit judyringer.com to discuss a training, coaching, or additional support for your leadership team.

Read *Unlikely Teachers: Finding the Hidden Gifts in Daily Conflict*, by Judy Ringer

Download additional articles from judyringer.com, such as:

- We Have to Talk: A Step-by-Step Checklist for Difficult Conversations
- Purposeful Communication: A Role Play
- Being Heard: 6 Strategies for Getting Your Point Across
- How to Keep a Good Employee: Look, Listen, Learn

© Judy Ringer, Power & Presence Training

About the Author: Judy Ringer is the author of *Turn Enemies Into Allies: The Art of Peace in the Workplace*. She provides conflict and communication skills training based on mind/body principles from the martial art aikido, in which she holds a third-degree black belt.

Employing best practice communication models, Judy brings to life key concepts such as self-management under pressure and appreciation of other viewpoints.

Judy is also the author of *Unlikely Teachers: Finding the Hidden Gifts in Daily Conflict*, and three CDs: *Managing Conflict in the Workplace*, *Simple Gifts: Making the Most of Life's Ki Moments*, and *This Little Light: The Gift of Christmas*, all of which can be found on her website [www. JudyRinger.com](http://www.JudyRinger.com), or Amazon.com.

Note: You're welcome to reprint all or parts of this article provided you include this "About the Author" bio or a link to my Website. If you have any questions, send me a note at judy@judyringer.com.