



10 BEHAVIORS TO AVOID WHEN BUILDING A WORLD-CLASS LEADERSHIP TEAM



THE MOST SUCCESSFUL LEADERS BUILD THE KIND OF TEAM THAT EVERYONE WANTS TO BE ON. **IS THIS WHAT YOU HAVE BUILT ?**

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There is always an “It” team in an organization - a team that every high potential person wants to join. In successful companies this tends to be the very top team. In failing companies the few high potential leaders who remain are either trying to exit or join a team where they think they can make a difference.

Successful teams don't wait for a crisis to collaborate - they do so because it provides a performance advantage. Even failing teams collaborate during really tough times - they just don't do it very effectively, and they do it because they have to. I've observed leaders on successful teams doing everything they could to help and support other team members because they knew that if these team members succeeded, the whole team would win. Collaboration is a state of mind rather than just a behavior. Those leaders who collaborate the most effectively generate more ideas, and achieve greater benefits to the enterprise.

A leadership team that carries the worries of the world on its shoulders for all to see, that looks overburdened and under stress, isn't an attractive proposition to aspiring leaders. Creating a sense of purpose and commitment turns out to be a critical advantage for the very best teams. The paradox here is that successful teams are incredibly hard working, often dealing with significant and intractable problems, and members are hardly in it for an easy ride. Yet, they exude a sense of purpose and vitality that is both aspirational and infectious.



LEADERSHIP IS NOT ABOUT A PARTICULAR POSITION TOWARDS THE TOP OF A HIERARCHY, OR THE CAPABILITIES OF ANY ONE, OUTSTANDING INDIVIDUAL.

There are common patterns present in teams that tend to fail. In fact, our research suggests that ten elements compound the difficulties all leadership teams will face. You'll learn more about the details of these shortly, but let me first provide you with three examples. You do not want any of these elements present in your team:

1. FAILING TEAMS TEND TO HAVE A WEAK OR NON-EXISTENT PICTURE OF EXCELLENCE.

It isn't that they fail to achieve their goals, it's that even these goals are underwhelming. The biggest problem is that they set threshold goals where success or failure is binary. They either succeed or fail (more often fail) by these goals. Talk to leaders in struggling organizations and they see success in terms of survival. They lack a searing picture of excellence, of how good something can be or how far they can go.

2. FAILING TEAMS TEND TO DO A REALLY POOR JOB OF CELEBRATING THE LIMITED SUCCESS THAT THEY DO DELIVER.

This situation nearly always arises through the budget setting process where competition for scarce resources is most accentuated and team members try to secure benefits for their own function. This also reveals an underlying attitudinal problem about how they see their role as leader - struggling leaders tend to have a singular, technical focus, rather than a broad enterprise focus. They lead their function, they defend it, they protect it, often at the expense of what is best for the enterprise.

3. FAILING TEAMS TEND TO OPERATE THROUGH EXTENSIVE LOBBYING BY INDIVIDUAL TEAM MEMBERS TO A LEADER WHO WOULD THEN ACT ON THIS LOBBYING.

I observed one failing team in a meeting where the CEO asked one executive leader who had just reported outstanding results to "tone down" her success because it made every other team member look bad. Leaders whose role modeling plays down success should not be surprised when everyone lives down to their expectation.

On the page that follows, you'll discover detailed findings on the top 10 factors present in failing teams. Chances are that some of these are present in your team, and these need to be completely eliminated.



TOP 10 LIMITING FACTORS PRESENT IN TEAMS THAT FAIL

- 1.** Inability to clearly define roles, purpose, and accountability of the leadership team. There is no clear sense of individuals being part of a leadership team.
- 2.** Weak and inconsistent picture of “excellence” in leadership functioning and contribution.
- 3.** Lack of clarity in team implications of corporate governorship, especially around financial disciplines, individual and collective responsibilities, and decision-making.
- 4.** Lack of clarity in managing expectations, information exchange, and decision-making between functional leaders and the Leader.
- 5.** The presence of an undue functional emphasis (over the collective interests of the company/organization) in the way that individuals advance issues for decision – the greatest challenges are seen and articulated as divisional not organizational.
- 6.** Leadership behavior is territorial, often dictatorial, which prevents sharing and dialogue and strengthens silos.
- 7.** The absence of an over-arching Strategic Plan encourages a “silo” mentality, increases factionalism and negatively impacts senior leadership engagement.
- 8.** The absence of shared accountabilities tied to an over-arching Strategic Scorecard discourages cooperation and collaboration and leads to individuals pursuing independent, divisional objectives. The absence of clear, collective, measurable accountability is the single most serious limiting factor in the effective functioning of the leadership team.
- 9.** In the absence of a clear framework for decision-making, individuals bypass collective consultation (usually through direct approach to the Leader...which is not discouraged) to secure decisions that help them make progress in their functional roles.
- 10.** The growth, success, and enhanced standing of the company/organization is not matched by a positive expression of collective achievement and pride of association with the leadership team.

Whatever weaker elements are present on your team, your approach should be the same. Share and discuss your observations with your team and build up your ideas for addressing these issues.

If you are diligent and follow through with your actions, then team dynamics and behavior should definitely improve. If not, you have to ask why and be prepared to accept that you might be the problem. Most teams do get better, and this should encourage you to keep a strong focus on team dynamics and behavior all of the time.



SO, WHY, DO APPARENTLY STRONG LEADERS SOMETIMES FAIL?

Leadership is not about a particular position towards the top of a hierarchy, or the capabilities of any one, outstanding individual. By focusing on the team dynamics that contribute to the greatest performance outcomes, the Principles of Great Management Program will help you discover and unlock your true potential.



Conchie Associates delivers the experience gained from working with some of the most important companies on the planet to a broader audience. We are committed to bringing research insights into world-class development programs that will help individuals learn, grow and achieve top performance.

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Barry Conchie is recognized as one of the world's top experts in executive leadership strategy, assessment, development and succession planning because his approach delivers results. He coauthored the New York Times and Wall Street Journal bestselling book, "Strengths Based Leadership: Great Leaders, Teams, and Why People Follow," and is frequently ranked as one of the top global leadership thinkers.

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