



A leadership learning series from in-FUSION Group

V1: reality, checked

Congratulations you made it

Whether you're a newly promoted leader or you've been at it for years, adding those initials to your title was a marker of success. You worked, you studied, then worked even harder - and just when you started to wonder when all the hard work would pay off - you got promoted.

Congratulations, you made it up the ladder. The climb upward may have seemed like the hard part; as it turns out, the difficulty is staying balanced on top. Once you become a leader, your past professional successes are old news. It's no longer about what you can do, but who you can lead. What's more difficult than staying at the office until 6:30 on a Friday to finish a report? Motivating and inspiring others to do the same. What's harder than delivering on a deadline? Getting results.

Paying the reality check

It's not an easy job, but somebody's got to ... fail? Not the proverb you were expecting, but it's reality. If you think about it, you know it's true. Sure, you have been lucky to work for some great leaders, but you also learned a whole lot from Mr. What-Not-To-Say and Ms. How-Not-To-React. You swore you'd never be *that* kind of leader, but simply learning from bad examples doesn't assure great leadership.

So, if you weren't classically trained by Mandela, Jobs or O'Connor – and you've read all the Franklin Covey books and still feel like an imposter in a polyester suit, what are you to do? The answers cannot be Googled, but here's what decades of experience, followed by an afternoon of caffeine and research did turn up. To grow as a leader, you must be willing to turn inward, be honest about your flaws and face them head on. Chances are, you're currently falling short as a leader because of one of these common pitfalls:

1. Communication Breakdowns

It's number one on our list, because it is the most common root cause of issues in the organizations we work with. Do you remember that model from your business communications class with the message, sender, receiver and the dreaded interference? Well as a leader, you are basically a communications referee. Here are the three most common penalties you need to spot and call:

- ⇒ **Speaking in Silos:** Remember those old Pac-Man games when you could only move up, down, left or right? Video games don't work that way anymore and neither do our organizational charts. If you are only talking to your functional team, or to the leaders in your peer group, you are leaving others in the dark. We need all hands-on deck and clear messaging to all players on the team to win. Withholding information now will only lead to conflict later.
- ⇒ **The Clunky Cascade:** What one leader says eloquently in a meeting, many others will say differently or not at all. Don't assume your whole team got the message, ensure they do with effective internal communications. Important messages should be documented and broadcasted. Leadership

messages have the most power when they are communicated by a senior level executive, then reinforced by department leaders.

- ⇒ **The One-Way Conversation:** Broadcast messages ensure your whole team heard the same message, but not that they understood it or agreed with it. Open up the feedback channels and listen. This may seem easier in smaller teams or organizations, but technology enables even larger companies to hear from all staff. Post a blog or video and read the comments. Send out an electronic survey. Create a special email box. But don't forget the most important part – your response.

2. Lack of Focus

Multi-tasking has been heralded as a strength, and in today's technology laden world, it's almost impossible to focus on one task at a time. Walking and chewing gum is one thing, but having an effective conversation with your face in an iPad, or thinking strategically while answering emails... well those combos just don't work. Simply put, there are situations that require 100% of your focus. And too much multi-tasking will ultimately lead to burnout.

Technology isn't the only distraction we face as leaders. We have also observed a rapid spread of a deadly leadership virus known as N.S.O.S. or next shiny object syndrome. It is caused by an overwhelming amount of competitive data, too many hours of conference attendance, and those catchy Simon Sinek memes. It leads to erratic meetings, foggy visions, and deviations from your strategic plan. Try these tactics to sharpen your focus:

- ⇒ **Identify your most important goal:** Don't burn up all your time putting out fires or chasing innovation. Identifying your most important goal and making it the first priority everyday will help you ensure you deliver on your vision.
- ⇒ **Stick to a schedule:** This doesn't mean accepting every back-to-back meeting invite that comes your way, but it does mean keeping some time sacred – like those important meetings with your direct reports – and some time to think and execute.
- ⇒ **Unplug:** Silence the cell phone, turn off the Outlook alerts, sign off messenger, log-off the social feeds, and so on. Remove all distractions for a portion of your day, every day. The two times you should definitely unplug – when you are having a 1:1 conversation or when you are focusing on an important deliverable.

3. Too Much Ego

You're kind of a big deal. We get it. You got where you are because you're talented, driven and intelligent - or at least damn-lucky. So, if you haven't mastered selflessness and altruism, chances are your ego rears its head from time to time. That Mr. or Ms. Know-it-All that lives in the back of your head has a few key phrases you need to listen for:

- ⇒ **The "I'll Just Do It!"** You've been there, done that and have all the answers. You're too busy to delegate work to someone who hasn't done it before.
- ⇒ **The "That's My Job!"** You're the leader of this team, this project, or this businessy thinga-majigger. You don't need someone coming in your territory trying to upstage you.
- ⇒ **The "What's In it For Me?!"** You do enough around here. If they want you to take on anything else, they better make you the E.E.V.P – extra-executive vice president – and give you a bonus.

Taking it all on your own shoulders will only wear you down. Leadership isn't a competition, but the ultimate game of teamwork. Divas eat first, but in case you haven't been keeping up with literature, leaders eat last.

Get in-FUSED

We created in-FUSION Group 8 years ago with the vision to be more than a consultancy. We dig in and work with our clients, becoming a part of your team and your organization. So often, we help build a new competency, write a strategic plan, or implement a significant organizational change, then we pass the torch on to the leadership team. We know that the missing link between vision and execution is strong leadership. The senior team at in-FUSION Group has more than 70 years of leadership experience and want to use our experience to teach you the un-Googleable. We've partnered with the best leadership coaches around, including a former Navy Seal to create a new leadership development academy. This is not for the faint of heart. We will challenge you to look inward, be brutally honest and committed to growth. Ready to leave your comfort zone? Learn more about our first **Executive Leadership Academy** being held in 2018, contact us at 877.224.2429 or by email at info@in-fusiongroup.com to learn more.