

THE

# SEVEN

COMMON

# LEADERSHIP MISTAKES



by Jacqui Pollock

## Introduction

As a leader you'll know that the only thing constant in the workplace is change; whether it happens to you, through you or because of you. Which is why, businesses today need resilience and agility. But a company is only as strong as its people, so there's never been a more important time for leaders to focus on:

- Human connection
- Mastering the art of motivating people

*“Leadership is not a domination, it’s the art of persuading people to work toward a common goal”*

Daniel Goleman, psychologist and author of Emotional Intelligence

Leadership is about understanding who you are working with and making sure you can get the best out of them. This sounds simple, but because we all operate within our own emotional frame of reference it can be tricky to recognise when the problem rests with you. Which means, you could be unknowingly hindering human connections and clear communication at work by not being aware of your impact on the people around you.

If people don't feel heard and understood, they won't listen to you. So, if you are not building connected and authentic relationships with your team it will be difficult for you, as a leader, to inspire them and lead them effectively toward optimum outcomes.

**Grab a coffee and take the next 15 minutes to discover if you are making any of these seven common leadership mistakes**

There are seven common mistakes that can damage human connection and hinder leadership outcomes. Each mistake has tell-tale signs that will help you catch the unconscious patterns that might be present in your leadership style. If you can identify your part in these communication misfires you are well on your way to having Game Changing Conversations that will inspire, lead with purpose and get better results from your team members.

# 1. Coming in at high speed

The business world moves at breakneck speed. Everyone is rushing from one meeting to the next and our heads are full of to-do lists and deadlines.

Coming in at high speed, with your mind on other things, is one of the most common mistakes that a leader can make. Not only does it create a lack of focus to the tasks at hand, but it can also leave everyone feeling out of control. This affects a leader's confidence which can manifest in poor communication and careless language that may trigger others and break the lines of trust.

Coming in at high speed can also lead to irrational reactions to small problems and an inability to prioritise what is important. It's impossible to be present and grounded if we're running from one meeting to the next. Our brains are good, but they're not that good!

Guiding your team towards prioritising tasks properly and explaining how they relate back to the bigger purpose is a leader's biggest challenge. If you are coming in at high speed all day, you are not:

- Modelling the good behaviour you want to see from your team
- Operating with clear purpose.

*“The single biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has taken place.”*

George Bernard Shaw

Leadership is about showing your team you are present and have a clear vision with a logical strategy for how to get there. If you cannot demonstrate this clarity of vision your team will not follow you.



## **Signs you are coming in at high speed:**

- Always thinking 'I'm too busy'
- Lacking clarity on what to prioritise and delegate
- Feeling out of control
- Not having enough time to pause and reflect
- Firing off emails too quickly



*What's missing here is pause and purpose.*



### **SOLUTION:**

Slow down. Remember the power of pause. Connect with purpose and 'why', as opposed to ticking meetings and interactions off your to-do list.

## **2. Doubting yourself as a result of stress**

When leaders are stressed they can fall into a cycle of doubt, secretly lose confidence and start exhibiting 'personal-worst' behaviour. This can lead to unhelpful criticism of others and damaging self-talk. The mistake we all make here is not being self-aware.

It's important to be able to recognise, as a leader, the behaviour and triggers that create your own feelings of stress and self-doubt. Busy leaders often underestimate the importance of expanding their own emotional intelligence because before leaders can claim to understand others they have to really understand themselves.

Most of the time, looking at your own behaviour and trigger points can help you to recognise when you have fallen into a trap of blame and self-doubt.

***“For leaders, the first task in management has nothing to do with leading others: step one poses the challenge of knowing and managing oneself.”***

Daniel Goleman

When leaders blame and doubt (both themselves and others) they are left feeling stressed and stuck and once we attach to those feelings, we engage in unhealthy self-talk. Which means in our minds we catastrophise, exaggerate, omit and delete information. Learning how to be resilient in these moments helps us lift ourselves out of the spiral so that we can once again be confident, respected and inspiring.



### Signs you are stressing out and doubting yourself:

- Thinking that problems are all everyone else's fault
- Thinking secretly that others are 'stupid' 'lazy' or 'difficult'
- Lack of trust in others
- Feeling like you are banging your head against a brick wall



*What's missing here is consistent self-awareness*



### SOLUTION:

Respond, don't react. Get to know your triggers. Recognise when you are not responding resourcefully and functioning mentally at your best. Put the oxygen mask on yourself before helping others.

## 3. Speaking too much and listening too little

Just because you are the leader, it doesn't mean you always have to be talking and offering solutions. Listening to your team members is just as important as guiding them and giving them advice on how to proceed.

When you interrupt others, talk over the top of them or steal their story you bring the focus back onto yourself and you damage connection and trust. Remember, if people don't feel like they are being heard and understood, they won't listen to you.

A quality conversation is like a game of catch, everyone needs equal time with the ball, don't just catch it and keep it to yourself. Deep listening skills require presence and practice, which are the essential but often missing ingredients for Game Changing Conversations. When someone speaks, assume they know something you don't know.

You should also be conscious of making room for different personality types.

Introverts, for instance can take a few moments to gather their thoughts and absorb what others have said before they start speaking. When you listen to the first thing they say, and let them expand, you'll be encouraging cognitive diversity. And cognitive diversity gives a business a real competitive edge.

***“When you talk, you are only repeating what you already know. But if you listen, you may learn something new.”***

Dalai Lama

Commit yourself to good quality one-on-one conversations with other people where you say less and listen more.



#### **Signs you are speaking too much and listening too little:**

- ‘I’ve heard all this before.’
- ‘I know what they mean’
- ‘I know what I’m going to say when they stop talking’
- ‘Hurry up I haven’t got all day!’



*What’s missing here is presence and trust*



#### **SOLUTION:**

Shift from listening to respond, to listening to understand. Aim to make others feel heard.

## **4. Lack of preparation for important conversations**

Work conversations, particularly when they involve giving others feedback, can be tricky. If leaders don’t acknowledge this - if they simply go into one-on-one interactions without thinking about what they’re going to say first- it can damage connection. Leaders commonly make the mistake of thinking that their conversations don’t need rehearsing!

Without preparation, some leaders can fall into a polarising approach to giving feedback: they swing from ‘hinting’ with passive aggression to ‘clobbering’ by being overly direct and blunt. Neither approach generates the desired change, and the damage in human connection and relationships can be lasting.

***“Daring leaders who live into their values are never silent about hard things.”***

Brene Brown, New York Times bestselling author of Dare To Lead

It's also important not to avoid difficult conversations and issues and for these interactions it helps to have a plan. For instance, use a feedback model that allows you to skilfully articulate the impact that someone's choice or behaviour has on you, the team, and the organisation.



**Signs you may need to rehearse better ways of communicating:**

- Not saying what you really think for fear of upsetting others
- Telling yourself you're not good with conflict
- Wanting people to just do things your way
- Frustration that you and the other person are not on the same page



*What's missing here is the confidence to speak with clarity.*



**SOLUTION:**

Make a plan. Rehearse your conversations. Create a feedback culture and agree on the feedback language everyone will use to make it part of everyday Game Changing Conversations. Communicate the 'why' so that people can understand the bigger purpose.

## 5. Telling rather than asking

Good leadership means leading people to resolve problems, rather than solving problems on their behalf. If you are telling your team members how to handle a challenge, rather than asking them thoughtful questions that might lead them to resolve their issues by themselves, you are not creating empowerment.

The common mistake here is to rescue people rather than support them. It may be quicker and easier in the short term to solve issues yourself, but in the long term you won't achieve effective change amongst your people.

Effective leadership is helping other people unlock their own potential. And asking, rather than telling is the simple but profound difference that will allow you to connect and have Game Changing Conversations that benefit both parties. With this in mind, think of yourself as a coach, rather than a 'boss'.

***“Coaching is unlocking a person’s potential to maximise their growth.”***

John Whitmore, business coach and author of, *Coaching for Performance*

There has been a global shift in Leaders adopting a Coach approach. For the 21st Century mounting leadership challenges, the model of choice has become the Leader As Coach style.



**Signs you may be telling rather than asking:**

- You give a solution rather than leading others to it
- You’d rather do it yourself because it’s just quicker
- You often make suggestions instead of asking questions
- Your team members keep making the same mistakes and don’t learn from them



*What’s missing here is coaching capability: the skills to motivate and inspire*



**SOLUTION:**

Develop a ‘leader as coach’ approach and connect with others to inspire them to be their best selves. Use coaching conversations as models for your one-on-ones. Practise the skills of powerful questions and invest in mastering the art of motivating people who are different to you.

## **6. Dismissing other people’s views**

This is often the hardest mistake to catch ourselves in! We all have unconscious bias and when we don’t pay attention to it we make split second decisions and form unqualified opinions about others.

Sometimes intentionally, but often times unintentionally, leaders end up excluding others, cutting them down and dismissing their ideas and views. In an instant, connection, respect and trust are damaged.

***“Strength lies in difference, not in similarities.”***

Stephen Covey, Author of *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*

Leaders must become masters at standing in other people's shoes and asking powerful questions. If conversations become counter-productive, stop and think about what the other person's behaviour is really telling you. Listening to understand others builds trust and is an essential ingredient for communication.



### **Signs you may be dismissing other people's views:**

- Thinking, 'they're not listening to me.'
- Feeling that others are deliberately making your life difficult
- Wondering 'why on earth would they say that?' but not really trying to understand
- Talking about people behind their back
- Having judgemental and critical thoughts about someone else



*What's missing here is a wider perspective and inclusivity.*



### **SOLUTION:**

Stand in the other person's shoes to really connect to them and unlock patterns of misunderstanding. Get out of your own head see things from other perspectives.

## **7. Falling back into old habits**

Leaders have the very best intentions to continually learn and be curious (just listen to the commitments people make at the end of an inspiring leadership workshop – you've probably made them yourself) but new habits don't happen by accident. Unless you commit to daily practice and making your own growth a real priority, then it's all too easy to fall back into old ways.

The biggest mistake leaders make is to listen to their inner voice saying, "it's not me who needs to change."

***"We must become the change we want to see."***

Stephen Covey, Author of The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People

While it may be easier in the short term to respond to issues in the same ways, this focus on small wins will never result in real emotional growth or long-term career development; we get stuck in a comfort zone and resort to familiar closed-minded thinking that blocks change. If we lack curiosity about new ways of working and thinking, we will never move forward.



### **Signs you may be stuck in old habits:**

- Not spending time reflecting and de-briefing
- Thinking, 'this will do'.
- An attitude of 'near enough is good enough'.
- Not trusting new ideas, citing them as unrealistic in 'the real world'.
- Telling yourself it's too hard or I don't need to change.



*What's missing here is curiosity and harnessing your 'a-ha' moments.*



### **SOLUTION:**

Connect to growth. Set up new experiments for continual learning, growth and new ways forward. Scare yourself with new ideas.

## **Human Leadership**

The constant disruption, change, and inevitable uncertainty effects individuals differently. If as leaders we're unable to expand our emotional intelligence and lead inclusively by utilising individual abilities and personalities then - we will be left behind.

Identifying your own mistakes is part of having an expansive, flexible vision that will allow you to keep growing both in your career and in your personal and professional relationships.

***“By teaching people to tune into their emotions with intelligence and to expand their circle of caring, we can transform organisations from the inside out and make a positive difference in the world.”***

Daniel Goleman, psychologist and author of Emotional Intelligence

These seven mistakes (often made unconsciously) damage human connection in teams and hinder leadership outcomes. Here's a recap on what each of them are.



## The Seven Common Leadership Mistakes

1. Coming in at high speed
2. Doubting yourself as a result of stress
3. Speaking too much and listening too little
4. Lack of preparation for important conversations
5. Telling rather than asking
6. Dismissing other people's views
7. Falling back into old habits

Did any of these Seven Common Leadership Mistakes resonate with you? If you spotted your part in some of these mistakes, make a note of the solutions recommended. Ask yourself,



***“What’s the one thing I can remind myself to do differently?”***

# HELLO

I'm Jacqui Pollock, founder of Human Leadership and I'm here to support you to become the best leader you can be. I truly hope you gained some insight out of this eBook. If you're ready to discover more about the latest secret that's giving savvy leaders the ability to have Game Changing Conversations and create inclusive cultures and engaged teams that align with their company vision then let's have a conversation.

## Have a conversation with Jacqui

Schedule a complimentary call with Jacqui and have a conversation about how Human Leadership can give you the leading edge.

<https://www.humanleadership.global/booking>

## About Jacqui the Author

Jacqui Pollock is the founder and CEO of Human Leadership. With an extensive background in the corporate sector as Managing Director of a Human Relations company combined with over 2000 coaching hours with Senior Leaders, Jacqui is widely renowned as the go-to Leadership Expert in Australia.



A published author and speaker Jacqui has facilitated over 100 workshops with global blue-chip companies in USA, Japan, SE Asia, Europe, Australia and New Zealand and worked with Leaders at: Audible, McDonalds, Sun Rice, SBS and Government Departments.

"My core passion has always been to inspire people to connect. I'm the parent of a young adult with a disability and this experience further opened my eyes to the value of cognitive and personality diversity in leadership."

Jacqui and her team are best known for helping Leaders become more inclusive by expanding their emotional intelligence and improving communication so they can have Game-Changing Conversations (at work and at home).

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