Bonusly Presents

# The Leadership Survival Kit

Timeless Tips, Insights, and Advice

for New Leaders

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# How to Be the Leader You Wish You Had Starting Out

Not all people placed in management and leadership positions belong there.

Most of us have had a bad manager, and in most cases, those bad managers weren't actually aiming for mediocrity or worse. Most likely, they didn't have the tools or the methodologies they needed to succeed, but they kept going anyway. That's not you though, right?

**It might be.**

Excelling in your profession is great, but sometimes you excel a little too much and get put in charge of a team you weren't ready to lead.

From startup founders to engineering leads, sales managers, and shift managers, a number of people who are placed in leadership positions unprepared. You might know some, or even *be* one of those people.

**So now what?**

You have a few choices. You can be one of the bosses you remember less than fondly from the past, or you can work to become the team leader you wish you had years ago.

There are a few keys to achieving that goal. If given some genuine effort, they'll pay massive dividends.

# Don't Be Afraid Not to Know

The only thing worse than being lost is being lost and getting bad directions.

It's alright not to know the answer to a question as long as you're willing to learn the answer. The best managers and team leaders have an undying thirst for knowledge, and a desire to share it.

However, people commonly run into trouble when they're under the assumption that as a leader they must know or have an immediate answer to everything. You might not, and that's okay.

**It's even good sometimes.**

Take each question you're asked that you don't know the answer to as an opportunity to expand your knowledge of a subject. It's impossible to know everything about anything, but having an intimate grasp of your area of expertise is an attainable goal. A question you're asked that you don't have an answer for doesn't need to be a scramble; it's simply another opportunity to improve your expertise.

Prioritize learning, both for you and your teammates. Your team and their own expertise are an extraordinary source of strength.

You don't need to know everything about management or leadership either. In fact, you shouldn't. If you think you do, you're wrong, and you're probably one of those past managers you didn't care much for.

There are countless resources to acquire both the techniques and tools you'll need for leadership and management. Google's re:Work project has an extensive, inclusive, and well-designed curriculum.

## Uplift Those Around You

Great leaders don't oppress those they lead; they elevate and uplift them.

Andy Hargreaves, the Thomas More Brennan Chair in Education at Boston College explains the results of a seven year global study across a wide variety of organizations.

The research found that the best-performing organizations:

- Promote an inspiring dream that connects to a remarkable future, and the best of your past.
- Learn from others to forge a unique creative path
- Collaborate with competitors
- Pull people rather than pushing them
- Connect good data with good judgment

Each of these attributes can be applied to your leadership and management style. Because each organization is unique, it's up to you to determine how these elements will fit.

# Always Make Time



You don't need to drop everything and be on call and available all hours of the day, but your team does need to know you're available to them as a resource.

**Time and availability are some of those all-important intersections between leadership and management.**

Great management is the key to *being* available as a leader. If you're allocating your time and bandwidth resources effectively, you'll have the time and energy you need to share with your team.

Many of the world's greatest chefs and restaurateurs are able to run more than one exceptional restaurant because they're not just brilliant artists, they're often brilliant managers and team leaders. They're skillful delegators, talent sourcers, and system designers. They build a well-oiled machine that they can step away from without anxiety.

If you're experiencing an increase in your daily responsibilities and a drop in the frequency of face-to-face contact with your team, consider holding regular office hours.

There's no need to take this literally and make it a matter of *hours* -- just keep a regularly scheduled time slot, and don't violate it. You'll be able to anticipate and plan around, and your teammates will know there's always a time they can reach you with important questions or issues, or simply to catch up.

# Consult Your Peers



Mentorship in your area of expertise is a valuable service you can provide for your team, but it's equally valuable to seek out your own leadership mentors.

**Remember: you're not the first one to try to work this out.**

It's never a bad idea to ask other people in leadership positions how they've gained the respect and admiration of their peers. Take someone out for coffee or lunch, and soak up some leadership tips and insights you might not encounter otherwise.

It's also crucial to remember that others on your team work with you, not under you. They're a vital source of information on how you can develop and improve your leadership and management skills.

Ask your teammates how can you can be of more service to them, and how you can facilitate the work they're doing more effectively. Because they're working closest to the issue, there's a good chance they'll provide some unique and much-needed insight. Just stay open to the possibility that you can always do what you're doing better, and try to keep from reacting defensively if you hear something unexpected.

If nothing else, you'll be expressing your interest in improving their day-to-day experience in your organization, and that kind of open, positive dialogue is priceless in building trust and goodwill.

## Stay True

There's a common expectation that once someone is placed in a leadership position, they'll change. They're no longer a trusted colleague; they're a boss.

**That doesn't have to be you.**

Providing a sturdy foundation is crucial in numerous aspects of leadership, and this is no different. Although personal growth and evolution are imperatives as a leader, it's equally important to stay true to yourself and your team -- after all, there's a pretty good chance that's what got you where you are in the first place.

## In Conclusion:

Alan O'Rourke, VP of Growth at OnePageCRM put it well in a  LinkedIn pulse article he published on this subject:

> *"You may have been promoted to a managerial position and are a "boss" now, but this doesn't automatically make you a leader."*

Leadership demands a different perspective. It requires more from you than simply being a boss, but it's infinitely more rewarding.

Now that you're wearing those shoes, it's time to live up to and even surpass the expectations of your team.

**It's time to be the team leader you wish you had starting out.**

# What Great Leaders Know About Recognition

Did you know that 3 out of 4 companies have an employee recognition program?
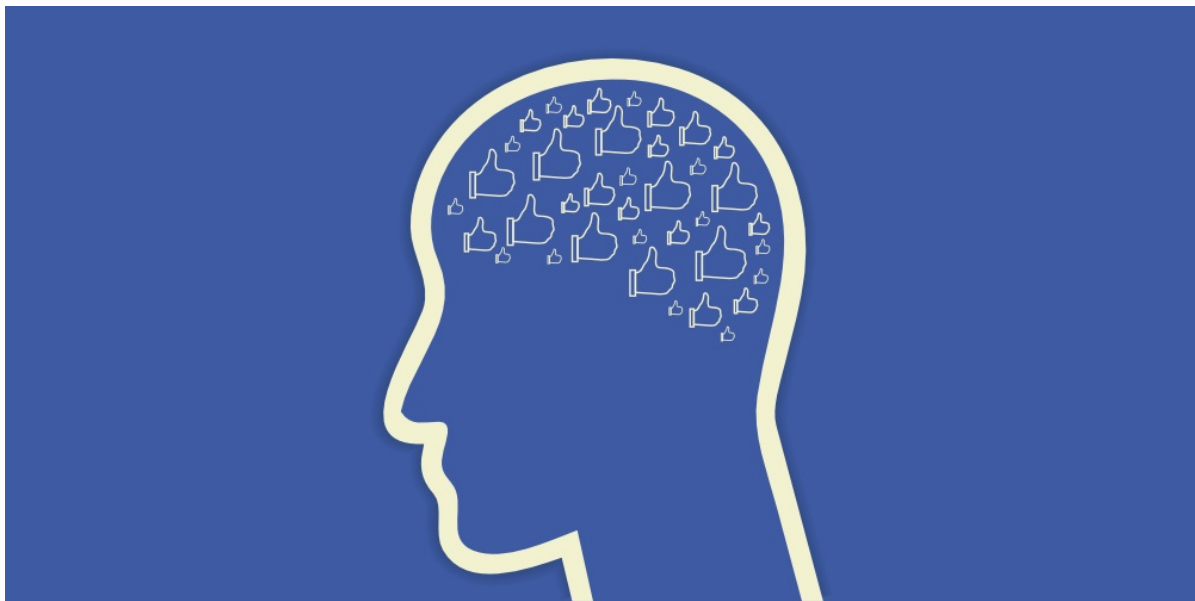
At face value, it would sound like the business world is making great progress, yet a recent study found that just 58 percent of employees even knew their companies had one.

The same study Bersin & Associates conducted that revealed the statistic above also mentioned that:

- Almost two-thirds of respondents felt that recognition was not effectively enabled by HR

- "Senior leaders are out of touch with how often employees are recognized"

Great leaders effectively leverage recognition -- both for the benefit of their team, and for the business.

# Employee engagement drives business performance.

Towers Watson has studied employee recognition and engagement extensively, summarizing years of analysis in its Turbocharging Employee Engagement: The Power of Recognition from Managers white paper. Some key findings were:

The financial performance differences in operating and net profit margins were significant (5.75 percent and 3.44 percent respectively) -- as were the 9.3 percent higher shareholder returns produced.

# Recognition plays a crucial role in engagement.

In an earlier global survey of nearly 90,000 employees, Towers Watson identified some of the factors that lead to a rise in employee engagement: "effective and caring leadership, appealing development opportunities, interesting work, and fulfilling tangible and intangible rewards."

Two strong drivers of employee engagement were: sincere interest in employee well-being from senior management and the personal development opportunities.

# The Source Matters.

Recognition from immediate managers can boost two principal engagement drivers: opportunity and well-being. Towers Watson published another study on employee recognition which reinforced its earlier work.

This study found that manager-delivered employee recognition boosts employee engagement, especially in the personal development opportunity and sincere interest for the employee's well-being categories.

In high engagement workplaces, manager-delivered recognition led to a favorable engagement boost of 20 percent. In low engagement environments, the engagement boost was nearly 60 percent.

# The most meaningful recognition comes from peers.

It feels great to be praised for your work and have your boss show a genuine appreciation for your efforts. It feels great to be noticed and acknowledged. It is meaningful.

At the same time, have you ever been acknowledged from afar -- say from HQ for reaching a milestone like a 5-year anniversary? It feels good, but not nearly as good as it does when it comes from an close colleague who sees and appreciates your hard work day in, day out.

In fact, Towers Watson found that the most fulfilling recognition experiences came from within their teams or work groups or at the department level. In other words, from peers.

# Inclusiveness, communication, and trust are essential.

As a leader who understands that role that employee recognition plays in engagement and business performance, you need to know that it's not just about doling out rewards and praise.

Towers Watson's report on manager-delivered recognition identified three requirements for effective recognition from managers:

**Inclusiveness** -- Recognition is given frequently, and all employees have the opportunity to be recognized.
**Communication** -- The immediate manager communicates openly and is receptive of new ideas.
**Trust** -- Employees trust their immediate managers and feels that management trusts the judgment of their employees.

When these three ingredients come together, the end result is an engaged employee who feels that their organization recognizes and appreciates good work.

# Money isn't always the answer.

TINYPulse published its 2014 TINYPulse Employee Engagement and Organizational Culture Report last year, detailing 7 key trends impacting today's workplace.

One of those trends shows us that money isn't the answer to the employee engagement question. The number one reason why employees go the extra mile? Peers and camaraderie.

Luckily, most employees will happily oblige. TINYPulse's study found that most employees give peer-to-peer recognition when they have a tool to do so.

Let's take a moment to sum it up:

- Engagement drives performance.

- Recognition boosts two principal engagement drivers.

- The most meaningful recognition comes from peers.

- Effective employee recognition programs are built on inclusiveness, communication, and trust.

- Employees go the extra mile for peers and camaraderie.

You can use this knowledge to start recognizing the efforts of your peers more effectively right away.

Even better, work to establish a formal peer-to-peer recognition program so that your team have the tools they need to deliver the most meaningful recognition there is -- then watch performance and engagement improve.

# 10 Things That Will Instantly Make You a Better Leader

Simple strategies to strengthen your leadership skills

## 1. Understand accountability.

Accountability is an oft-misunderstood concept. The common misconception is that accountability is something that someone must be 'held to,' but in its truest form, accountability is something to be embraced.

**Why is it important?**
As a manager, you can only hold someone accountable as long as you're willing to expend the effort into doing that. The moment you lift the pressure off, accountability disappears. This technique works, but it's neither efficient or sustainable.

**How to improve?**
Achieve the goals of *embracing accountability* and better leadership by giving your team the autonomy they need to approach problems in a way that they feel they can take genuine ownership over them. Watch them transition into happily accepting accountability for *their* responsibilities, and leave the managerial pressure back in the past. It's not healthy for anyone.

## 2. Build trust.

Trust is absolutely vital to the success of any relationship, and it is a two-way street. You need to know you can trust your employees to do their best every day, and they need to trust the decisions you make are in the best interest of the team.

**Why is it important?**
In order to give employees the autonomy they require to truly embrace accountability, and experience the joy of a dedicated, engaged team, you're

going to have to trust them. Before your team can truly dedicate themselves and engage in your organization, they need to trust you.

**How to improve?**
Start by analyzing the work environment -- not just the physical environment (although that is definitely a factor) but the overall environment. Policies and procedures are just as much a part of the work environment as the walls and desks. What types of things is this environment implicitly and explicitly stating about trust within your organizational culture?

Identify architecture, actions, policies, and procedures that don't connote trust, and consider whether they're truly necessary.

# 3. Be a facilitator.

The best leaders are facilitators. They don't tell an employee what to do; they give employees the tools (and sometimes constraints) they need to do their absolute best work.

**Why is it important?**
For employees to reach the stage of self-actualization, or reaching the pinnacle of their abilities, is hardly ever possible without support. A great orchestra needs a great conductor, not because the conductor cellos for the cellist, shows a flautist how to flute. The conductor facilitates the pace, direction, and harmony of an already extremely talented group, and something extraordinary comes from it.

**How to improve?**
Take a step back and think about situations where you might better serve your team by facilitating the work they're already doing, and the efforts they're already expending. They'll thank you for it, you'll eliminate a center for stress in your job, and your plate will be less full in the long run.

# 4. Be a better communicator.

You can't be a good facilitator if you're not a good listener, and any great director must express themselves clearly.

**Why is it important?**
Communication is everything. Whether it's communication between you and your significant other, or your team, you'll never achieve your most ambitious

goals without healthy communication.

**How to improve?**
It's crucial to understand that communication is not only bi-directional, but unlike trust you'll be better served by understanding that it's more like a one-lane road.

Two trucks can't cross paths in opposite directions on the same road, and two people can't effectively express themselves and listen at the same time. So make it a point to pull over regularly, and give others a chance to pass before heading around the next bend.

# 5. Break down barriers.

All kinds of barriers exist in the workplace. Physical barriers like walls and distance combine with less physical, but still very real barriers like time, hierarchy, technology, communication, and culture. 2016 can be the year of the sledgehammer -- breaking down barriers wherever they stand, and becoming a better leader because of it.

**Why is it important?**
Have you ever heard anyone express their gratitude for having run up against a series of silos or other pointless barriers in a task they were working on? "I love communicating and sharing documents exclusively through reply-all email chains!" or "Good thing I wasn't able to share my new marketing initiative directly with the members of the sales team who would benefit most from it."

If you have, I'm sorry that guy, but someone's got to tell you: it was sarcasm.

**How to improve?**
Although it seems like a challenge, this one's a piece of cake. Once you make a resolution to break down barriers in your organization, you'll be addicted -- and nobody's going to schedule an intervention -- in fact, people will thank you for it.

Some things you can immediately do are:

- Think about the tools you and your colleagues use. Are they creating an unnecessary barrier to communication or collaboration? There are some great modern alternatives out there.
- Seek out silos and consider whether they're truly necessary (they're

probably not)
- Plan time to build community within your organization -- it's important

# 6. Recognize all contributions, large and small.

Frequent recognition is one of the most important steps to becoming a better leader. Your team needs to know that you value their contributions -- this goes for everyone on the team, from the intern to the senior executives.

**Why is it important?**
Each contribution someone makes to the team is valuable, and taking time to express that value can have an amazing impact on engagement and retention. Employees who are putting in their best effort need to be recognized for that effort, otherwise you're denying them an incentive that is on par with their salary.

Think about it this way: salary is 100% fungible -- your salary dollars are wholly replaceable with your competitor's salary dollars. What's not replaceable? The way an employee feels about the work they do, and the people they do it for.

**How to improve?**
Recognizing every contribution might seem like a **Sisyphean task**, but it's not, it's more of a **Herculean task**. Bear with me now:

Sisyphus was forced to push an enormous stone up a massive hill, only to watch it roll back down, then rinse and repeat for eternity. There was no respite for him.

Hercules was charged with a similarly enormous task. Eurystheus charged Hercules with the unthinkably large task of cleaning up the stables of King Augeas, who owned more cattle than anyone, in a single day. Instead of grabbing a pitchfork and shovel and digging into the manure, Hercules dug channels into the ground near the river, diverting it through the stables and flushing them clean in one day.

Think like Hercules, and make recognition easy. Avoid the head-on approach by using tools like peer recognition. Peer-to-peer recognition enables your team to recognize one another, and be recognized for, all the great work and contributions that happen on the day-to-day. The people employees work most closely with are more likely to see and feel the impact of those contributions.

# 7. Embrace and reward small improvements

New Year's resolutions are all about celebrating and facilitating growth, whether that's personal, professional, or otherwise. But why limit that mindset to once a year?

**Why is it important?**
Growth is incalculably valuable, and it doesn't happen overnight. It's important to take time to reward and recognize even small, but positive steps forward. After all, those small steps are what add up to impact.

**How to improve?**
Make sure you're not only recognizing growth, but facilitating it.

That could come in many forms, from providing professional development opportunities, lunch-and-learns, certification courses, mentorship programs -- really, the list is endless and it's only limited by your creativity and imagination.

The most important thing to do is consistently ask yourself "What kind of growth opportunities am I providing my team, how can I improve on those, and how can I make sure we're celebrating the steps my colleagues take toward being more awesome?"

# 8. Do one thing that scares you.

Speaking of growth and improvement, 2016 is the perfect time to step out of your comfort zone, and try something new. But not just something new, something you're a bit afraid to do.

**Why is it important?**
Once you've done something you're afraid of (and assumedly lived through the process) you'll have less to fear. Although danger is real, fear is a mental construct and it's usually unwarranted. Facing your fears will make you a stronger, better leader, and will help you to confidently guide others through the similar situations.

The more times you face your fears, the more you'll realize that

**How to improve?**
There's only one way to improve here: just go and do it.

Find that one thing you've been avoiding and tackle it -- don't give up until you walk away victorious. It can, but doesn't have to be work-related -- the confidence you gain will translate either way. Maybe it's changing the serpentine belt in your car by yourself, sleeping without a night-light, or doing your taxes. Whatever it is, go do it, then find the next challenge.

## 9. Stay true.

This is so important. Stay true to yourself, true to your colleagues, and true to your organization's goals. When those things don't align, it's incredibly difficult for anyone to thrive.

**Why is it important?**
Your team needs a solid leader to rally around. If you're flip-flopping on decisions, and regularly changing your tune on issues, it's going to be corrosive to that trusting relationship you've worked so hard to build.

**How to improve?**
Be that strong foundation your team can build from. This doesn't mean sticking to your decisions even when you realize they're bad decisions. It's more about upholding a positive and unwavering standard that others can look to.

## 10. Have more fun.

If you're *never* having fun at work, you're in the wrong profession. Yes, work isn't always going to be a laugh a minute -- that's one of the reasons you get paid to do it -- but it's important to have fun, and if it seems there's none to be had, make some.

**Why is it important?**
If you're not having fun, there's a good chance that's going to be the same experience others are having. Enjoying work is a major factor in how long employees be willing to do it, and how much they'll demand in return for sticking around.

**How to improve?**
You don't have to install a pinball machine and hold office flip cup championships, but it's got to be there in some form or another. You might find it in the unlikeliest of places. The most important thing to do is look for it. If you find it, share it. If it's not there, create it.

# Big Mistakes Experienced Leaders Make

It's not easy being the boss.

At times it can seem like there are more ways to fail than to succeed. Even great leaders still make big mistakes -- sometimes repeatedly. Although occasional mistakes are natural to make, it doesn't mean you have to make the same ones others already have.

Let's take a moment to explore a few of those common mistakes that even great leaders make, and some ways you can avoid making them yourself.

## Lacking Communication

Communication is everything. Whether you're a marketing agency, an auto manufacturer, or a tech startup, your ability to communicate effectively has a massive impact on your success. This is especially true for those in management.

Your ability to communicate directly impacts your effectiveness as a leader. The difference between serviceable communication and extraordinary communication is huge.

So how do you improve communication in your organization?

Start by defaulting to transparency. This doesn't necessarily mean you need to adopt a policy of radical transparency. It's as easy as shifting your perspective from asking "Is it necessary to share this info with the team?" to asking "Is it absolutely necessary to keep this info from the team.

As Peter Economy, the Leadership Guy shared in his Inc article,

> "Make every effort to get employees the information they need to do their jobs quickly and efficiently."

There are also some extraordinarily useful tools like Slack, HipChat, and Yammer that are reinventing the possibilities of business communication.

## Mismanaged Expectations

It's one thing to be ambitious, and another thing entirely to misunderstand your team's capacity. There's a fine line between motivating your team to exceed their limitations, and pushing them too hard.

This may be one of the most common mistakes leaders make. Management expert Robert H. Schaffer explained this propensity in a Harvard Business Review article he wrote:

> "In all the organizations I have observed, managers commit several transgressions when making demands of their people."

Leaders often make this mistake, and end up with a demoralized and poorly engaged workforce, carrying the assumption that their best will never be good enough.

The key is keeping the message positive, and finding the right balance. If an employee makes great strides in a particular area, make sure to recognize their accomplishment.

If you can't always be there to personally congratulate employees on the improved contributions they're making, ensure that you've engineered an environment where their peers easily can.

## Unbalanced Participation

It's incredibly challenging to strike the perfect balance between micromanagement, and a laissez-faire free-for-all. In fact, finding the perfect balance of participation might be one of the greatest employee engagement challenges leaders face.

Although nobody likes a micromanager, most employees benefit from direct access to the mentorship of a strong leader. Just because people aren't asking for help doesn't mean they don't need it. N2 Publishing's COO Marty Fukuda put it well in a recent Entrepreneur article he wrote:

> "*I wholeheartedly believe even the best leaders benefit from mentors, so why would your team be any different?*"

The challenge is having a clear understanding of the difference between guidance or mentorship, which are very positive tools you can provide your team, and micromanagement, which corrodes confidence and engagement.

It's unfortunately common that leaders (and most people, really) lack insight into their own behavior. If you're not really sure where your management style truly lies, here's a quick rule of thumb to check:

1. Do you often find yourself doing work, or making decisions you hired an expert for?

***You're probably a micromanager***.

2. Are your employees actively soliciting advice and guidance from you?

***You're probably a mentor***.

Make sure that your actions support the team -- to your best to be a great facilitator, not a participator in their daily work.

These are just a few of the most common mistakes that even great leaders still make. By learning from these mistakes, you can improve your own leadership style, and be a bigger asset to your team.

# Common Mistakes New Team Leads Should Avoid

It's alright to make a few beginner's mistakes, but luckily most of them are avoidable.

It's exciting, and sometimes a little unnerving to be placed in a leadership position for the first time. You have the potential to guide a team of talented individuals to success, but you also have a responsibility to make solid decisions.

Here are five mistakes that new team leads often make, and some easy ways to keep from making them.

## Pulling Rank

Don't do this -- not even if you're an executive, but especially not if you're a new team lead. It shows a lack of respect for your colleagues, a lack of self-awareness, and is one of the quickest ways to build lasting animosity between you and your team. In most cases, you're not actually outranking your peers as a team lead anyway.

You've been given a position of leadership to help an already talented team achieve the best possible results. Don't stand in the way of that talent; instead help guide it and cultivate it. One of the keys to doing that is recognizing and respecting the value of everyone's time, their skills, and their contributions.

**This is your opportunity to be a respected mentor facilitator; not the top dog.**

Our friends at Officevibe shared a great piece that helps clarify the difference:

If you're leading effectively, you're leading with a deep and genuine respect for your colleagues. You'll never need to pull rank because your team genuinely believes in your abilities, and will follow you willingly.

# Making Unilateral Decisions

Although you're in a position that likely requires you to make more decisions than before, you're on a team for a reason. That team is one of the greatest assets you have.

While it's not necessary, efficient, or even prudent to consult everyone on every decision you make, it is absolutely vital to include key stakeholders when you're making decisions that will affect them. There's a good chance they'll have some keen and specialized insight into the issue you're working on, and can help you to make a more educated and effective decision when the time comes.

Strong communication is one of the greatest assets you can bring to a team leadership position. Part of communicating effectively is taking suggestions with an open mind and without taking them personally.

If you do hear dissent from your team about a decision, it's worth considering. Unless you've broken rule number one, it's highly uncommon for others to default to dissent for the sake of obstinacy -- there's probably something important you're missing.

# Setting a Breakneck Pace



Of course you want to get the most out of yourself and your team, but it's important not to jump in and crank up the intensity to a level others aren't able to keep up with, or aren't comfortable with.

It's common to want to move quickly, and cover a lot of ground but starting out in fifth gear isn't going to get you farther, faster. You need time to gain an understanding of how everyone in the group works best, and how to use their unique strengths to the team's advantage.

**There's an old adage in racing that applies beautifully here: "Slow in; fast out."**

To negotiate a challenging corner most effectively, you enter it slowly. On exit, when most of the fine details have already been worked out, you can turn on the power and maintain the advantage you gain over a longer period of time.

Leading a team can be much the same.

It's good to test the limits of your team's capabilities, but you need to have a broad sense of where they are to begin with. If every day with you is a test of those limits, you're guaranteed to run into burnout on a mass scale.

# Doubting Yourself



On the opposite side of the leadership spectrum, we have self doubt. For new team leads, it's easy for self-doubt to creep in. That's okay, it's natural. The key is not to let it take hold, or guide your decisions.

You may not feel as though you're equipped to handle the responsibility of leading a team -- you may even feel as though you're an impostor in that position. Don't worry; you're not alone.

Impostor syndrome is a phenomenon in which high-achieving individuals aren't able to accept their success as genuine. They believe that they don't belong in the position they're in, and experience a persistent fear that they'll be found out and labeled a fraud. It's a surprisingly common experience across leadership (and even contributive) roles in nearly every hierarchy, industry, specialization, and demographic.

Talented leaders, actors, authors, and renowned scientists all suffer from impostor syndrome, and have for generations. While working on *The Grapes of Wrath*, John Steinbeck was quoted as saying:

> *"I am assailed by my own ignorance and inability."*

The problem is, if you truly don't believe you belong in a leadership position, it's hard to expect others to. Although leaders who feel from day one as though they're perfect for and deserve their position aren't often the best candidates either, it's important to understand that you were chosen for your position for a reason.

## Separating Yourself
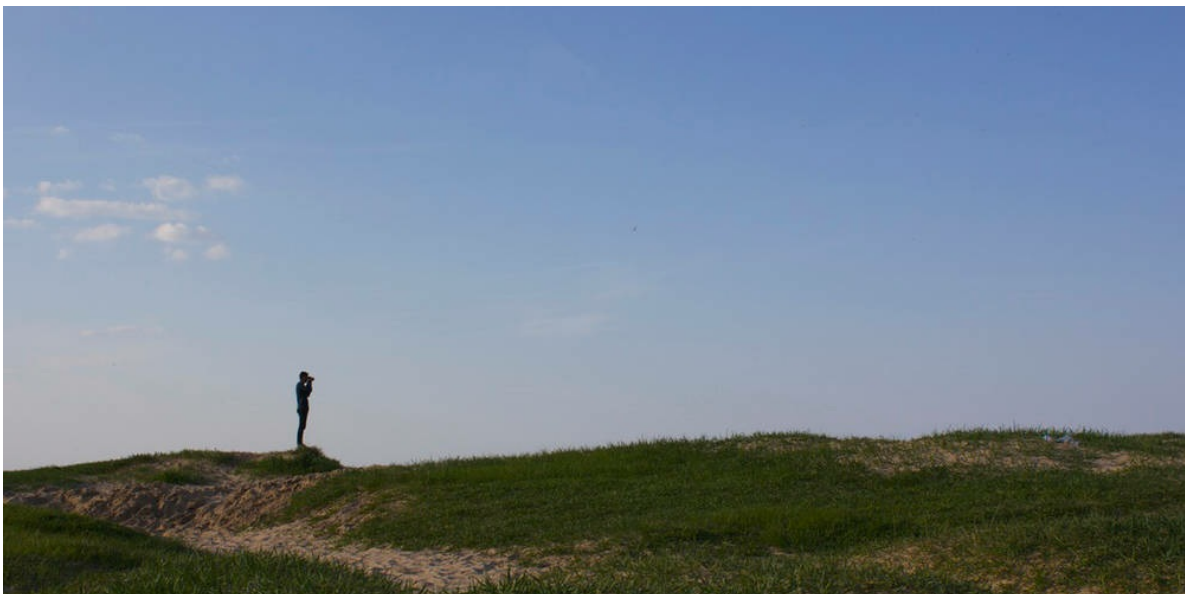


It's important for team leads to understand and maintain their place as a contributive member of the group. There are other management and leadership positions that designate some distance from day-to-day operations, but team lead is not one of them.

There's no need to be looking over everyone's shoulder, but it's crucial to be there when someone does need a hand. Keep your door open, whether that's literally or figuratively.

Make sure you're staying close with your teammates, connecting with them regularly, and visibly recognizing their contributions.

## In Conclusion

Becoming a team lead is a rewarding, and sometimes challenging experience. Whether or not you feel like you're ready for it, it's time to take ownership over the responsibility. You can make your transition a lot easier by avoiding some of the basic mistakes.

It all boils down to respecting, understanding, and uplifting yourself and those around you.

# Continue Your Leadership Journey

GET MORE GUIDES