



The Top Five Leader Mistakes: Part I

A few years ago, as part of an ongoing research project, I had the opportunity to interview twenty senior organizational, corporate, and military leaders about what they've learned and observed about leadership from their followers. There was consensus around these five themes:

1. The belief that the Walk is the Talk.

Those who are guilty have been deluded into believing that their personal example can be turned off and on like a light switch whenever they choose. What they fail to realize is that they are always leading by example, whether they want to or not. They have also convinced themselves that the rules and expectations that apply to everyone else don't apply to them.

2. The belief that leaders motivate people.

Consider this simple example of the mistake leaders make when they believe that they can motivate people. Assume that I'm your supervisor. If I directed you to physically move a box of rocks (assuming it wasn't too heavy) from one side of a room to the other, and you moved it, did I *motivate* you? If I said, "If you move the box to the other side of the room I'll give you an extra five bucks," have I motivated you? If I said, "If you don't move the box to the other side of the room, you're not going to work here anymore," have I motivated you? If you answered "yes" to any of these questions, you've made mistake #2.

3. The belief that leadership is a rational methodology.

Leaders' who commit this transgression possess an overreliance on the tools and trappings of modern management while disregarding the personal nature and requirement of leading people. 80% of people who voluntarily leave employment choose to leave because they are dissatisfied with their supervisor.

4. The belief that it *can* be someone else's fault.

The buck stops here has little or no meaning for those who make this mistake, yet they are first in line to grab the glory when things go well.

5. The belief that leadership is a *divine right*.

These leaders have mistakenly assumed that their title (Director, Vice President, District Manager, etc.) confers upon them the ability to influence.

In February, I'll share with you what these leaders told me about how to avoid and prevent these mistakes that can *be leadership killers* for anyone who is trying to lead people.