

Five leadership faux pas



By [Catherine Milward-Bridges](#)

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My passion for research into great leadership is fuelled by its integral role in achieving effective employee engagement - that one cannot thrive without the other. So, why is it that some leaders have their employees 'eating out of their hands', while others consistently face resistance, apathy or even chagrin?

[Research](#) shows that an alarming 65% of employees in the U.S.A. would opt for a new boss over a pay raise, and three out of every four employees find their boss to be the primary source of stress in their job. This is enough to jolt us all into worldwide crisis management mode.

In an age of ongoing transformation, it's vital that leaders equip themselves with the necessary [engagement skills](#) that will encourage employees to embrace change.

Here are some key reasons why the 'stars just don't seem to align' for some leaders.



Demanding praise

The leader who grabs glory for himself belongs in the past, back when it was mostly about the individual rather than leading the workforce to optimal innovation and performance. True leaders give praise and are a source of motivation.

Compromising ethics

A leader only has to behave unethically once for his image to be tarnished - possibly irreparably. I recommend the 'ethics test': Ask yourself, "Would I tell my child/any other young family member the undiluted version of what I'm about to do?" Children have a way of pricking our conscience with their simplistic approach, like no-one else can.

Saying what you don't mean

Trust takes a lot of effort to forge, but can be destroyed in one fell swoop! It's critical that a leader's word can be trusted by peers and employees alike. Employees are a lot more likely to follow a trustworthy leader.

Manipulation

Employees - and anyone else, for that matter - can see straight through a manipulator, and will quickly become resentful and antagonistic towards the perpetrator.

Showing favouritism

This is a sure-fire way to divide employees, which could have a domino effect on every other aspect of the business. A culture of fairness and due recognition instilled by the leader, will unite and motivate employees.



So, what to do?

Findings by the [Neuro Leadership Group](#) fly in the face of the age-old belief in one-dimensional leadership (comprising a

few university degrees, and maybe a bit of technical know-how).

The leader with savvy has embraced multi-dimensional leadership and is acquiring/honing the necessary skills to stay at the top of their game.



The type of talk that isn't cheap

The modern day leader requires the skills to engage their workforce on a level that will motivate them, as well as encourage optimal performance and innovation. First National Bank is a shining example in encouraging and rewarding innovation within the bank, and is reaping the rewards in leaps and bounds!

Change champions

Change starts with the individual - only once leaders have embraced change through the necessary training and paradigm shifts can they expect their employees to follow.

It takes a certain type of leader to take their workforce with them on a journey of change in which even they often don't know the outcome. It's a lot easier to take motivated, high-performing employees on this journey than it is to 'lug' a demotivated workforce, entrenched in a culture of low morale.

The 21st century leader faces a myriad of challenges - ones that can be mitigated significantly through effective employee engagement skills, in collaboration with a motivated workforce.

ABOUT CATHERINE MILWARD-BRIDGES

Catherine Milward-Bridges is a passionate communication specialist and founder of simplyput.co.za. Catherine guides her clients in taking their engagement efforts from good to great; and helps them optimise social media with strategic know-how.

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