

17 Blockages to Being a Great Executive



"First remove the beam out of your own eye, and then you can see clearly to remove the speck out of your brother's eye."

– Matthew 7:5

All humans have their baggage, blind spots and blockages. Unless we recognize and work on them, they can sabotage our careers and relationships. Having been an employment lawyer, investigator and executive coach I've experienced...and been guilty of...some of the following.

1 Acting out of integrity

It is difficult to salvage an executive who acts out of integrity. I usually advise employers to fire those executives. Because you cannot trust them. Trust is a delicate fabric. When you act out of integrity, you lose their trust.

2 Inability to motivate and engage employees

This has become a "hot topic." Data shows two-thirds of employees are disengaged. My experience is that leaders and managers do more to disengage employees than engage them.

3 Not communicating the big picture

I'll never forget an employee stating one time in a survey "How should I know what the vision is? I'm treated like a mushroom." Do employees know the long-term vision and goals? Are you assuming they do?

4 Inability to hire and develop talent

I remember a Jim Collins discussion where they asked him what he thought was the most important thing for building great companies. His answer was to make sure your managers hire great people. As a leader and manager, do you understand the most important thing you'll ever do is hire great employees and then develop that talent?

5 Handling pressure/stress/emotions

When we run 75 mph, it becomes all about our doingness. Our beingness gets left behind. We lose the emotional capacity to manage with grace and instead overreact, micromanage, criticize and even yell. What are you doing to steady yourself under this pressure?

6 Inability to delegate functions and authority

I've coached many executives who claimed they are on "overwhelm." It was part of their resistance to being coached in the first place. "I don't have time for this," they would tell me. Then when I worked with them, I realized that they were six-figure executives doing \$30/hr work. When you build a good team around you, you should constantly be delegating - not just functions but authority as well. Ask yourself this question - how well would my team run if I was absent for a month? Would my people have the confidence to step up and take over the functions and authorities I cannot address?

7 Inability to stay focused

Many of us have so much on the plate we become scatter-brained. When scattered, our energy is dispersed. However when focused our energy is like a laser beam and powerful. The easiest way to stay focused is to place all activities on calendar and not get distracted by those "squirrels" running by.

8 Non-inclusive

If you are a "my way or the highway" executive you will eventually get kicked to the curb. You are leading or managing adults, and they want to be included in decisions that affect their work or career. Remember - none of us is as smart as all of us. How are you including others in your decision making?

9 Lack of transparency

Many leaders and managers still don't like to share information. "None of your business, just do what I tell you to do" is their mantra. That might

have worked 30 years ago before the explosion of transparency, but it won't work now. When you are not transparent, your employees will think you're hiding things from them. And they won't give you their best.

10 Poor listening skills

Are you a good listener? Can you listen to somebody for five minutes straight without judging them, nit-picking them, providing your comments, or do anything other than ask clarifying questions? Try it sometime; they'll wonder what happened to you.

11 No sense of humor

Who wants to work for deadbeat? Do people enjoy being around you? Are you a fun guy or fun gal, or has life become so serious for you that you haven't laughed with anyone at work in ages? If you are no fun, I suggest you try to bring an appropriate sense of humor to the workplace.

12 Out of alignment with the company vision, mission, value or goals

Are you aligned with the company vision, mission, value, and goals? If I sat you down in front of your CEO and asked both of you "what's the most important work being done here?"... would your answers be in alignment? In my experience when people are not aligned they tend to vector off, and it gets worse over time. It's the job of leadership and management to continually bring both themselves and the people they manage into alignment.

13 Plays favorites... with the wrong people

When I managed, I had my favorite employees. Those were the people who got their jobs done on time and without drama. However, I have met plenty of leaders and managers with favorites, and they are not necessarily the best employees, but perhaps their best friends. When

you play favorites, and it's not related to results, you cause dissension. You can also find yourself accused of discrimination.

14 Failure to recognize and reward

Again, when we run 75 mph we can forget the importance of stopping to recognize and reward when people do good work. Sooner or later if you don't provide recognition and reward, your top performers will leave for a job where they do feel appreciated. Note: I record training for Lynda.com on Rewarding Employee Performance.

15 Won't or can't think strategically

Many managers are great tacticians. They are often elevated to their roles because they did their jobs better than anyone else. This does not mean they are strategic thinkers. When we think strategically, we work on our business and not just in the business.

16 Unwillingness to take responsibility

This is big. The buck stops with you. The beauty of taking responsibility in a situation is it does not open you up to guilt, remorse, and regret. That's what happens when we know we've been less than responsible. While responsibility feels like a burden, (since we were teenagers) it is in fact liberation.

17 Doesn't value diversity

While many companies talk about valuing diversity, many of their executives do not. Many would rather work with people in their own image. It makes them feel safer. They feel they can trust these people more. A lack of diversity can lead to myopia. We can get caught up in our little safe world without realizing the greater one outside of it.

There are other factors that influence the ability to be great leaders and managers including physical

or mental health problems, personal relationship problems, financial problems, and upset with company leadership.

As I state in workshops *"If it doesn't make sense, don't try to make sense out of it."*

These are not logical problems leaders, and managers face, they are emotional ones. One reason executive coaching has become so popular.

My invitation to you is to look at this as a checklist and see which of these factors may be a weakness in your game. Then just focus on improving one item at a time. Perhaps you can spend the week showing employees how you care about them. Or think of what five hours of low-value work you can delegate. Or even better...get a coach to support you in the process!

Interested in learning more about coaching? Contact me to experience it first hand as my gift to you!

About Don Phin, Esq.

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