



Chapter 2

One-to-Ones: You + You = 3

Note to self: Set recurring one-to-one meetings with myself.

So much happens in the daily life of a leader that it's important that you carve out time for yourself. As we've discussed, the best answers come from you, so why not spend some time working on that. And when we use the word work, it's not really work, because, let's face it, those good ideas just come to you because you have an above-average if not brilliant brain, right?

It's important that you make it a weekly recurring meeting, preferably on a Friday afternoon, say, after lunch. Schedule at least three hours because you don't know how long the process will take each week.

You can have this meeting with yourself anywhere: over a mani-pedi or a good massage, on the golf course, at a bar, in your car, literally anywhere you happen to be. The purpose of booking the room at your club is so that it *looks* like you've thought this out and take it seriously. The important part is that you get alone with your thoughts and really assess how you're doing as a leader. Ask yourself the following questions:

- How would you rate yourself on your leadership skills overall (remember, giving yourself a negative rating or being humble is for losers)?
 - Good
 - Above average
 - Excellent

- What good examples of leadership do you have from this week (that you can claim credit for)?
- Who had a good idea that you can use?
- Who questioned your leadership?
- What persistent problems should you blame on one of your team?
- Who might need to be taken down a peg?
- What can you brag about this week (leading by example)?

You'll be surprised by how quickly the answers come to you, and you'll have a whole set of action items to move forward on. But don't get carried away. Don't bother writing all your ideas down, especially if you're doing the mani-pedi one-to-one (your hands will be occupied!). You'll remember the best ones and know what to implement next week because it's what comes naturally to you.

Most importantly, don't be too hard on yourself. Self-reflection is about basking in the good, not criticizing yourself for perceived errors. Having a one-to-one with yourself is about reinforcing why you are the leader and how you got there. Relive your glory days in your mind and remember that you're still that person. Boost your confidence by reveling in all you own, all you've done, and how much your people love you. You're their leader and they know it!

This is a time to recharge your leadership chops by thinking about yourself. This will, by extension, help your team, but first and foremost it's for you. If there were someone else in the company who had better ideas than yours, that would be a threat, so there's no point in bringing anyone else into this brainstorming session. Your one-to-one with yourself does also show your team that you take your job seriously: that you give considerable thought and attention to the leadership challenges of the day.

Occasionally you can use this time to read up on the latest trends in leadership or your industry, but don't make this a habit. Remember, you know what to do by either looking backward or at what you feel in the moment so there's no point in paying too much attention to forward trends. Let someone else be first to work out the kinks. Nonetheless, you will want to take a business book or magazine with you so it looks like you pay attention to this stuff. Make a point of showing it to your executive team. One of the butt kissers will read it and tell you all about it, so what's the point of reading it first?

So get away, refresh, and remind yourself weekly why you're a good leader!

Let's Get Real

A one-to-one with yourself happens every minute of every day. Carving out fake time for it just reinforces that you do not value others' opinions and that yours is the most important in the room. One-to-ones with your team members are valuable, both for getting help and insight and for giving them. If you always have all the ideas, your team will be fearful of offering opinions, and eventually they will stop. Teams that don't discuss new ideas, or that only discuss those of their leader, eventually fail.

Getting insights from as many people as possible and distilling the information down to what's useful is a sign of a good leader. Coaches, mentors, and board members can all be very helpful in your leadership role. Having your own assumptions challenged by others will lead to better outcomes. Your team can be encouraged to challenge your ideas, and the result is learning for the entire team and, almost always, better ideas. The right insights are not always yours.

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(How Not to) Be a Leader

by Mary E. Marshall & Kim Obbink

(How NOT to) Be a Leader is the first in a series of how-not-to guides for newly minted leaders looking to avoid becoming feared or hated losers in the ivory tower or veteran leaders looking in the rearview mirror wondering where and why they ran off the road. Irreverent and hilarious, *(How NOT to) Be a Leader* shines a big bright spotlight on the oh-so-common mistakes that many leaders make when they plow forward through life and business without taking the time to really consider the effect their leadership is having on others. We've all seen and heard the horror stories of bad leadership, and hopefully many of us have been lucky enough to have been the benefactor of truly great leadership. Either way, if it's your turn at the top, *(How NOT to) Be a Leader* will help you understand what you can do to be a better leader by first understanding what you should never ever do; and if you are, why you should back up the truck, take another look at yourself and your leadership qualities, and do the work and self-reflection needed to get back on track.

Why this book series? Having been in the leadership trenches for a combined fifty years, we've seen a lot. Some good, some bad, and some really, really horrible. There was no guide for us, and we want to help all those leaders who will come after us. Not with a boring manifesto about a fictional leader who only exists in a book, but with real-life stories we've experienced or even perpetrated ourselves and vow never to repeat.

This book consists of twenty-four characteristics that you don't want to be known for. Not all twenty-four will apply to you and a few might resonate louder than others. What was it you heard in your last 360? Micromanaging doesn't work? You aren't listening? You want everyone to do it your way? You might have a few to work on, and our challenge to you is to choose three or four that seem the most immediate and start working on those. Once you've mastered them, take on a few more. And certainly share the book with those around you whose leadership styles need a little polish.

Should you accept this leadership challenge, you will be able to quickly identify twenty-four ineffective leadership traits and make changes to positively address them. Through the stories in this book, you will learn how to avoid the pitfalls of leadership, how to be a better leader, and, most importantly, how to pass good leadership on to those you lead.

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