



## Chapter 3

### **You're the Smartest Person in the Room**

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Sent: Monday, July 25 at 8:30 am

From: CEO

To: Executive Team

Subject: My Ideas

Meet me in the conference room at 9:00 am as I have some great ideas of mine that I want to share with you.

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One of the benefits of being a great leader is always being the smartest person in the room. It's important to maintain that brilliance and, more importantly, to make sure everyone else sees it. After all, if the rest of them were as smart as you, they'd be in charge, wouldn't they? Look at where they are and where you are. Pretty easy equation.

So let's talk about how you stay on top of this amazing gift you have to impart: your perceived intelligence. First, flaunt it at every step. For example, if there is a meeting or conversation going on and you know even a little bit about the topic, jump in with a random factoid (it doesn't need to be a factual factoid, however) that shows you're the expert. When you spout factoids of your own making (loudly and with confidence and authority) no one will dare question you. And if you do it repeatedly, you'll build the muscle memory that helps them remember that everything you say is true.

If someone dares contradict you, stand your ground, for this is brilliance in and of itself. Defend, defend, defend. A leader never gives any ground as doing so would cause those you lead to question you, which is completely unacceptable.

Occasionally, you will find that some in the room have more education than you or others, in rare cases, might even be right. The way to deal with them is twofold: First, ask yourself why you hired them in the first place, and never make that mistake again. Second, reassert your dominance through volume and interruption immediately. Let them continue talking, but interrupt by randomly peppering them with questions so that they become flustered. Then tell them to get their facts straight next time and leave it at that.

Another approach for dealing with this type of annoyance is to be very quiet while they talk. Let them finish, then slowly start clapping your hands. When you have everyone's attention, say to this person: "You get the gold star today. I was purposely waiting for one of you to come up with the right solution and you did it! I knew the answer, but I wanted to see if any of you were fast enough to pick up on my clues." This will blow them away every time, and you get to claim their idea while maintaining your status as the most brilliant person in the room. Mirror, mirror on the wall, why do they even try?

The final point on maintaining your brilliance is that you need to be very careful when hiring. You do not need anyone smarter than you around, so if a candidate seems even remotely better educated, more knowledgeable, more experienced, or in any way smarter than you, don't hire them. Never ever hire anyone who might be perceived as smarter than you. Why risk it?

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## Let's Get Real

Great leaders recognize their own strengths and weaknesses and surround themselves with talented team members who complement those strengths and weaknesses and those of other colleagues. Growth and innovation is born out of everyone learning from one another in a never-ending cycle of mentorship. If you are arrogant enough to believe that you have all the answers or are always right, you will stunt or prevent both the personal enrichment of your people and the positive evolution of your organization.

Your job as a leader is to focus and shine light on the contributions of others, not yourself. If you need validation and seek it from within your organization, you may not be ready for true leadership. Genuine leaders are validated by facilitating others' success. If you need a pat on the back, reach right around and give it to yourself. Good job!

# Table of Contents

Preface	1
<b>Section 1: Debunking the Stereotype</b>	
Introduction: Now You're Bossing!	5
Flaunt Your Wealth, You've Earned It!	7
One-to-Ones: You + You = 3	11
You're the Smartest Person in the Room	15
I'm Sorry ... What?	19
It's All about You	23
You Have All the Answers	27
Large and in Charge	31
Playing with Power	35
<b>Section 2: Valuing Your Values</b>	
Introduction: There's an Elephant's Asshole in the Room	41
The Irrelevance of Truth	43
Make Sure Everyone Knows When You're Upset	47
Show up as Anyone but Yourself	51
Drop Your Integrity	55
Be Loved	59
Managing Your Personal Brand	63
Evil Rules	67
Tears: Your Power Drug	71
<b>Section 3: Leading by Example</b>	
Introduction: The Road to Hell, Perfectly Paved by You	77
Micromanage the Shit out of Everything	79
Be Best Buds	83
Follow the Leader	87
The Waiting Game	91
Winning the Blame Game	95
Hazing as an Art Form	99
Gender Matters	103
Hub and Spokin'	107
<b>About the Authors</b>	111

# (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.

*Available now from [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com) in print and Kindle formats.*

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