



RIGHTEOUS

Chapter 6

You Have All the Answers

Sent: Wednesday, July 4 at 10:08 pm

From: CEO

To: Executive Team

Subject: Mind Map Session

A reminder to everyone that tomorrow is our mind map session for our new product line. Please be prepared to discuss all your ideas related to the subject. Don't bring any notes because I want to see how much you can retain and think outside the box.

After the session I'll expect a full report from each of you so we can compare the takeaways.

As the leader it's your job to have the answers, because you don't pay your people to think, you pay them to do. You will waste valuable time and money struggling to execute other people's flawed ideas, so keep your people focused on your vision, and tell them exactly how to do what needs to be done to get there.

How do you get all those answers? Well, it's tricky, but you get them from your team without them knowing about it. One sure-fire method for extracting ideas and answers from an unsuspecting team is to facilitate a mind-map session. You can learn more about this technique by Googling it and spending thirty or forty seconds reading about it, but essentially it's a method to solve problems without participating in the solution yourself. Bring everyone together and put the problem on the table. Go around the table making each person write the next thing they think about as it relates to the problem.

Keep doing this with each person pinging off the one before them—somewhere in there someone will come up with a good idea. Your job is to pluck out that good idea and start the process again by mind mapping off that. You do not need consensus or agreement as to whether or not the idea is a good one; instead, take immediate credit for it by saying something like, “That’s exactly what I was thinking. I’m glad you agree.” Or, “I was hoping someone would bring that up; it’s so obvious to me.” Then rinse and repeat.

Everyone but you should have been taking copious notes as you instructed them to, so once the mind-map session is complete, you can select the best notes with the most detail and assign the implementation of the solution to that person. You now have the ability to take credit for the process, the ideas, and the masterful delegation of the work that lies ahead. This is leadership at its best.

If you’re concerned that the person you delegated your ideas to doesn’t feel validated or feels like you’re taking credit for their work, simply follow up with some positive, leaderly reinforcement statements. You can say things like:

- You know you’re my favorite right?
- Did you see how I was leading you to that answer?
- I love how you enhanced my original idea.
- It’s great that you learned from my brainstorming techniques.
- I’m impressed that you noticed that I gave you the answer in my questions.

Remember: have all the answers and keep the pecking order in check, and you will always be seen as the smartest person in the room.

Let’s Get Real

As the leader you don’t have all the answers, and righteousness only makes you wrong even when you’re right. Your job is to empower others and be the facilitator or mentor for a better solution by leading the team to their own solutions, not corralling them to yours. When someone comes to you with a problem, first ask them what solutions they have thought through. Tell them you are happy to talk it out with them, but you want them to come up with an answer or two and you’ll help work out the best solution. When you mentor your people to the right answer rather than solving the problem yourself, they’ll feel more empowered and confident to find solutions in the future.

Great leaders encourage the contribution of ideas and solutions from their teams and commit to helping see them through to ensure their success. Don’t try to prove them wrong or hunt for opportunities to say, “I told you so.” Occasionally you will need to support ideas that you might not entirely agree with, but if and when those ideas fail, you will fail together. You would want the same if you asked your people to follow through with something you felt strongly about that failed or had a different-than-expected outcome. Remember: the only thing that’s worse than failure, is failing alone. And that is the result of righteousness.

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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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