



UNSTABLE

Chapter 10

Make Sure Everyone Knows When You're Upset

Sent: Saturday, August 1 at 6:46 am
From: Management
To: All Staff
Subject: Turnover Rate & Attrition

All,

Yesterday I received our Q2 Turnover & Attrition report and I was ABSOLUTELY HORRIFIED by the data. In the second quarter, we lost 35% of our staff to voluntary resignation and yet another 12% to involuntary termination. This is COMPLETELY UNACCEPTABLE and I hold each and every one of you accountable for these disastrous results. This makes us look like COMPLETE BUFFOONS and our competition is sitting at our front door like HUNGRY WOLVES just waiting for our best talent to walk out where they will be greeted with open arms. I'm sending this to everyone because this is not only the fault of our managers, it's the fault of EACH AND EVERY ONE OF YOU for not creating a better culture and more stable work environment. And I speak on behalf of our entire management team when I say that we EXPECT MORE from all of you. I want these numbers down 50% in Q3!!!! This is not open for discussion and I do not want to hear any excuses.

Enough already goddammit!

As all great leaders know, your temperament is the barometer the entire organization will adjust itself to. And so, it's very important that when you are disappointed, upset, or just plain steaming mad, everyone knows. This can be achieved by your tone, your body language, and your spoken and written language. It is especially effective to communicate your dissatisfaction in emails, texts, and instant messages. Capital letters, underlines, italics, as well as smart and forceful use of punctuation are all useful techniques to put your unwavering passion on display. But nothing puts the cherry on the cake of the moment like a strategically placed expletive. Statements like "This is total bullshit!" or "She can go fuck herself!" or "You're a bunch of goddamn idiots!" are statements that, while shocking in the moment, are totally unforgettable and wildly effective.

When you've had enough of the apathy, excuses, blaming, and sheer laziness that leads to poor business performance, you have no time to waste in making sure everyone knows that you've reached your wit's end. Remember, there is nothing wrong with instilling a little fear into your organization. Fear keeps people on their toes and, more importantly, causes them to do whatever they can to avoid the next verbal smackdown. If, in their minds, that firestorm looms around every corner, then you've got people exactly where you need them.

If you are a business owner, it's especially important that everyone knows the sacrifices you personally have made to create the company. That it's your vision and yours alone, and nothing will stand in the way of its success, especially an apathetic, lazy employee. Putting (and keeping) on your best "How dare you?" attitude will solidify your leadership position, keep them operating at peak performance, and end-run any flare-ups that might be brewing amongst the ranks.

But if you are a member of an executive-management team, there are other techniques you can use to achieve the same effect! You also have the luxury of blaming up and directing your anger at the owner, the investors, or any other person or entity that the staff might believe has authority over you. This preserves the illusion of your loyalty to the staff, so that their love and adoration for you goes unscathed (See Chapter 13: Be Loved) and also gives you one glorious last resort: the pity party!

As a member of a management team, you can quickly and effectively let your team know how upset you are by staging a breakdown. Phrases such as "I'm working so hard for you guys" or "I don't know what I'm doing wrong, I've done everything for you" or "I don't think you appreciate me" are all ways you can make your team feel guilty for their poor performance. Remember: guilt is every bit as effective as fear, so don't hesitate to use it. And like the old saying goes, "Never feel guilty for making people feel guilty—that defeats the purpose!"

Leading unpredictably and as emotionally as possible keeps people guessing, which is exactly where you want them to be. The more unstable you appear, the more likely they will pay attention to your every move. Now you have them right where you want them.

Let's Get Real

Great leadership means having a steady hand, steady heart, and steady mouth. There is no place in business (or in life for that matter) for leading through fear or guilt. These are manipulative tactics that will result in both broken people and a broken company. Every leader has moments of frustration, disappointment, and even anger. But your team is looking to you for calm resolve and focus on the issue, not emotional explosiveness. Putting your negative emotions on display will only do one of three things:

1. Give others permission to emulate your behavior.
2. Create a culture of fear that suppresses ideas and innovation.
3. And yes, send your employees running for the door.

This is not to say that you can't or shouldn't be open and authentic with your feelings. You can and should! But be impeccable with your words, your body language, and your tone. Be empathetic, and always come from a place of strength and calm resolve. Emotionally intelligent leaders are authentic and appropriate in their use of emotion. Stability from leadership produces stability in the workplace, and productivity is the result. Not to mention happiness, which is why people choose one workplace over another.

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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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