



DISRESPECTFUL

Chapter 20

The Waiting Game

Be right there—taking longer than I thought.

Just got into a fender bender. Cops taking for EVER to write the report.

I threw my back out again, going to have to WFH. Can someone send me all the docs to review?

Slight emergency, gotta run to the vet.

Forgot my password, I can't login and nobody in IT is calling me back so I won't have feedback for you until tomorrow.

I'm going to be late for the Board meeting—tell them I'm meeting with a customer.

Bad day. Not going to make it by 10. Start without me, but you'll need to clear your schedules to stay late so you can catch me up on what I missed.

The conference call access code didn't work for me. What did I miss?

I thought the meeting was on Tuesday. I'm still at my beach house. Postpone.

I'm out of time, it's just going to have to wait.

Be there in 10.

On my way.

Be there in 20.

That's exactly right: your schedule comes first, and don't let them forget it! Great leadership means making sure that those you lead are respectful of you and your schedule. Understanding and accepting that your schedule is the schedule that dictates theirs is their first step in a successful relationship with you. Make this known from the outset, and you will avoid conflict in the future. Not only is there the simple fact that you are busier than anyone else, there are also specific strategic reasons to operate on your own time and to never feel guilty about making them wait. Don't accept accusations of being disorganized or rude. Own your lateness and make it work. Here's how:

Make an entrance. The more important the event or meeting is, the more grand your late entrance should be. This is an opportunity to make a statement about your importance, disrupt the meeting, and get everyone on their toes where they should be! When you enter a meeting in progress, make sure that your hands are full so that someone has to hop up and open the door for you, clear a place for you at the head of the table, and help you with your belongings. This physical manifestation of subservience is a sure-fire way to start the meeting off right—it's just starting after all because you've just arrived. Having a coffee in hand is a great way to say, "I took my time getting here" without having to say a word. Holding the remains of a muffin or sandwich says, "This meeting is inconvenient for me and interrupts my flow." Showing up late in your gym clothes says, "I take care of myself first." And walking into a meeting while wrapping up a call on your cell is the ultimate way of letting everyone know how very, very busy and important you are.

Be indifferent. You do not have time to care or even notice what affect your tardiness or absenteeism has on those you lead. It's simply not your problem. The second you appear to care or be defensive about it, they will begin to manipulate you, and before you know it, you will be a slave to your team—not a dynamic of great leadership. So rise above the criticism they might level at you, and ignore them entirely. The only conversation that matters is how they are going to start marching to the beat of your drum.

Never apologize. You can't be indifferent if you're defensive or apologetic. Never ever apologize for missing an event or call or being late to a meeting. It's not your fault, it's just the way it is, and they have to adapt. You're the leader; your schedule is the schedule from which all else flows, and the more you put this into practice, the better for everyone. For that matter, never apologize about anything as a leader—it's weak and for losers.

Save your energy and adopt a scapegoat. If being indifferent or not apologizing is a challenge for you, then the right solution for you is to have a scapegoat. An executive assistant saves you energy by making your excuses for you, while also giving you someone to lay the blame on for your disorganization, lack of respect, and general thoughtlessness. Of course, your assistant should care or appear to care, and should be an excellent apologist taking full responsibility for your tardiness and absenteeism. If not, fire them now.

Remember: It's all about you, and practice makes perfect.

Let's Get Real

As a leader, the Golden Rule applies to you more than anyone. Your actions and words set the tone for your entire organization, so when you are disrespectful and inconsiderate of others, this behavior will be mimicked. Your entire culture will suffer, and before you know it, you will be sitting alone in that conference room while your people play the waiting game right back at you. The intentional culture you want starts with your actions, your behavior, and the values you demonstrate daily. Disrespect others and they will disrespect you. Every child knows this!

Nobody is ever too busy to be considerate. Consideration is not a factor of time, its a factor of respect. If your busyness causes you to be chronically late, then you need to take a good hard look at your inability to organize and prioritize, and get some help. Others are dependent on your leadership in order to reach their own goals, make their own deadlines, and manage their own workflow. Inconsistencies and lack of reliability on your part makes their jobs infinitely harder. No one will respect you or your time if you don't start by respecting their time.

So get it together: be on time, every time.

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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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