

FAILSAFE Leadership

55 REASONS WHY OUR LEADERS FAIL

PRACTICAL STEPS TO SUCCESS

Matthew Ashimolowo

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Practical Steps To Success

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Published by RiverBlue Publishing

Kindle Edition

ISBN 978-1-909113-02-2

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INTRODUCTION

The recent failures witnessed in industry by companies like Enron and WorldCom and the catastrophic fall of people like **Bernard Madoff** is a picture of leadership failure.

This trend is repeated in different strata; **Donald Trump**, the paragon of real estate filed for bankruptcy because of business downturn; while spiritual leaders have failed because of character or integrity issues:

Jim Baker – convicted for fraud

Rev. Ted Haggard – admitted to liaisons with another man - even though he had stood against any form of same sex relationship.

All these are pictures of leadership failure, and it goes as high as presidencies; **President Richard Nixon** resigned over the Watergate scandal.

This is leadership failure and it is found in almost every area – business, politics and religion. Many leaders have started from the bottom of the heap but have unfortunately ended up under the heap.

Mighty men have fallen in the past.

"How the mighty have fallen, and the weapons of war perished!"
2 Samuel 1:27(The Holy Bible, NKJV)

The failure of leadership has been registered around the world with the replacement of CEOs because of bad decisions, not listening, failing to make decisions, or making low quality or emotional decisions. Being defensive when a decision has not been beneficial to the organization could also be at the root of why our leaders fail.

Another possibility may be self-deception, which makes one think that one is immune and with that attitude ignores all the warnings of the impending possibilities of failure.

In this book I have attempted to deal with the subject and look at many of the reasons why our leaders fail; from the minor to the catastrophic, from the reasons that are seemingly inconsequential, to the ones that cause monumental disasters.

It is not an attempt to celebrate failure but a guide to leaders to pay

attention and heed the warning signs.

1. WHEN THE LEADER HESITATES TO TAKE DEFINITE ACTION

Consensus building is a characteristic of quality leadership. However such seeking of consensus and consulting widely should prepare the leader for making decisions and taking definitive actions. Indecisiveness is the number one kiss of death for leaders. Most great leaders have made their impact in moments of tremendous challenges by taking the bull by the horns at the appropriate time. An unspoken universal law of leadership is that people want their leader to make tough decisions and then lead them forward.

Until June 4, 2010 Yukio Hatoyama was the Prime Minister of Japan. Before his disgraceful exit he came to power from a political dynasty, and promised to make changes which gave the impression that a world changer had arrived. It was not long before it became obvious that he was sky high on promises and paper thin on fulfilment.

"All men seek one goal: success or happiness. The only way to achieve true success is to express yourself completely in service to society. First, have a definite, clear, practical ideal-a goal, an objective. Second, have the necessary means to achieve it." Aristotle

When a leader is unable to take action at the appropriate time, he is bidding his career or future goodbye.

When leadership fails to take action and a negative result follows, the buck stops at the table of the leader. It is said that the captain of one of the most historical and sensational shipwrecks – the Titanic - was warned of danger through various radio signals. However he hesitated to make a definitive decision; the result was the ship colliding with a massive iceberg. Most of the leaders who have distinguished themselves before us have been willing to make tough calls.

Overcoming inaction, separately as individuals and corporately as a body, may require the creation of time-lines for committees and team members. Mechanisms for turning discussions into actions need to be put in place and the leader needs to negotiate the powers to make

certain decisions quickly where the situation demands. The leader might also find it necessary to create an Execution Committee.

2. COMPLAINING ABOUT A LACK OF RESOURCES

While great and qualitative leaders tend to work out how to get the job done with limited resources, leadership failure will often occur because some leaders would rather focus on the resources that are not available and use this as an excuse for inaction.

Resource management is the efficient and effective deployment of an organization's resources when they are needed. Such resources may include financial resources, inventory, human skills, production resources, or information technology (IT). In the realm of project management, processes, techniques and philosophies as to the best approach for allocating resources have been developed. These include discussions on functional vs. cross-functional resource allocation as well as processes espoused by organizations.

Good leadership is known through effective resource management. Leadership is about effective application of the right resources to the right project for profit maximization. It is a mark of matured leadership not to throw money at problems, but to decrease expenses for effective achievement.

Most people have no idea of the giant capacity we can immediately command when we focus all of our resources on mastering a single area of our lives. Anthony Robbins.

“Lack of resource has hanged many a person.” Irish Proverb

3. REFUSING TO TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR ANY OF THE CHALLENGES THE ORGANIZATION FACES

A leader will either take the responsibility, or declare like **Harry S. Truman** that “the buck stops here”.

President Harry Truman had this sign on his desk in the Oval Office. He got the sign from his native Missouri. It was made and sent to him two months after the US dropped the atomic bombs on Japan.

True leadership does not pass on responsibility or blame someone else for the consequences of its decision.

Leadership fails because every single day in business relationships, someone is busy blaming somebody else for the smallest or the most major decision.

"The price of greatness is responsibility." Winston Churchill

All problems have their potential ways out. Admitting the wrong is the first step, and that needs to be immediate. Identifying the problem and proffering solutions before there are worse consequences is the next step. There should not be a beating about the bush to reduce the enormity of the problem.

True leadership means accepting that while you may not deserve the blame, you should shoulder it. You can then take things further in your acceptance of the blame, and work with your leaders in the hope that you will be protected for being truthful and vulnerable.

Once you have caused a problem or are a part of those who caused it, do not wait to be forced to apologise or remedy the situation.

4. ABUSING THE PRIVILEGES OF LEADERSHIP

An online encyclopaedia describes the abuse of privileges as "when a user performs an action that they should not have according to organizational policy or law ".

During one of my African tours for a series of speaking engagements, the airspace to one particular country had been closed for the presidential jets. The wife of the country's Vice President was arriving in the commercial capital. It was difficult to comprehend how the whole city could be brought to a standstill, and a decision that would hinder the commercial capital of the nation and cause such a colossal loss of money could be made. This is a clear example of abuse of office. It is probably not just the abuse but the numbness of the society to these kind of actions because of their regularity.

"Rank does not confer privilege or give power. It imposes responsibility."
Peter F. Drucker

When President Nixon authorized the bugging of the room of his opponents, he exceeded his powers and carried out an action he shouldn't have.

The root of the abuse of privileges is when leadership turns around and become dictatorial. In the book Animal Farm by George Orwell, Napoleon the pig turned his role from farm leader to dictator. The book captures the gradual transformation of leaders from servants of the people to users of the people. It begins with a delusionary belief by the leader that they are larger than life. From then they are like a monster that cannot be stopped.

It is nobody's fault that these leaders have become corrupt. We cannot hold the electorate responsible for electing the leaders who have turned bad. Corruption and abuse of power is sometimes a by product of greed. Highly placed leaders take their power and use it to abuse people and the position of trust they occupy. At its extreme the abuse of privilege could mean leadership seeing itself as being above the law, carrying out

extra judicial actions, acting as if it's one law for the citizens and another for the leaders. There are enough leaders like the late Saddam Hussain, Muammar Gaddafi and so on with enough greed and self absorption to cause adverse results for others, as long as things work for their own myopic interests.

Leadership failure occurs several times because people who end up in power forget they can still come down.

5. ENGAGING IN THE ACT OF INSUBORDINATION

Genuine and quality leadership will always have a point of reference; somebody who has the powers to checkmate a leader.

Sun Tzu said: "In warfare, there are flight, insubordination, deterioration, collapse, chaos, and setback. These six situations are not caused by Heaven or Ground, but by the general."

Most references to this subject is to subordinates who have not been submissive. This is true but the flip side is the fact that it also occurs in leadership circles.

Boldness, without the rules of propriety, becomes insubordination. Confucius

Leadership fails by an act of insubordination or disobedience to such authority or powers constituting to checkmate. Insubordination in this case is purposely ignoring a mentors counsel or instruction. This can often be the result of inexperience or bad judgement, which can itself be remedied with words.

Consider the army general who will not carry out orders, or the young Christian minister who fails to heed the counsel of his overseer but rather launches himself into an independent work; all in the name of the leading of the Holy Spirit.

In its extreme case, insubordination is manifested through physical confrontation, verbal abuse and a refusal to perform. Leaders who set themselves up for failure regard themselves as being above the expectation of a Board, line manager or mentor.

6. MAKING SCAPEGOATS OUT OF EMPLOYEES

"The search for a scapegoat is the easiest of all hunting expeditions."
—Dwight D. Eisenhower

"A boss creates fear, a leader confidence. A boss fixes blame, a leader corrects mistakes. A boss knows all, a leader asks questions. A boss makes work drudgery, a leader makes it interesting." *—Russell H. Ewing*

A weak leader plays the blame game and looks for someone else to take the blame; someone else to whom the buck can be passed; someone else who can take the fall when they need to. When that happens leadership has failed.

It is a fact of life that leaders love to hug the limelight when the organization does well. Some leaders go a little further by bragging on how their skills have helped in the progress or success achieved. However, when the ball drops and blame begins to fly, a bragging leader is unlikely to take the blame and will come out looking faultless to their superiors. Just because a leader says a problem is not his fault does not make it true. In reality such stance shows a lack of leadership and ownership on the person's part and in that kind of circumstance, the leader has failed. This kind of leader also likes to lay the blame for any wrong on other people. A bragging leader, who is part of a team, tries to come out looking and smelling like roses if the group gets a matter wrong.

Good leadership would mean to share more credit and shoulder more of the blame yourself. This may seem like a revelation of your weakness, but it helps others to know that you are human and less than perfect. Such deliberate vulnerability endears you to subordinates and makes the leaders above you know that you have leadership ability. Taking the least credit and accepting more blame makes you the bigger person because in that way you demonstrate humility and a rare form of self-confidence; one that is not afraid to look bad.

Instead of scapegoating the subordinates, it is wise to spend more

time coaching and training your staff to be the best, reach their deadlines and achieve their goals. When a subordinate does well, it will motivate them to hear their leader mention them and the milestone of achievement. Build the confidence of those who are struggling by creating the atmosphere for self redemption. Furthermore, where the sharing of the blame and the affirming of subordinates for success has been done, it has helped in creating economic and social value.

7. THE ABUSE OF POWER

"What I fear most is power with impunity. I fear abuse of power, and the power to abuse". —*Isabel Allende*

The attainment to leadership brings different kinds of power; positional, informational, financial and functional power. All powers come with strings of responsibility.

The abuse of power is when someone with a degree of power over people by virtue of their dexterity, social position, physical strength, wealth, weapon, technology or the strength others repose in them, use the power unjustifiably to exploit, harm and damage others or through the lack of action allow others to cause harm.

The abuse of power is when position is used to intimidate subordinates or those who serve with the leader. #It is when subordinates are threatened or their work sabotaged because the leader has an access and opportunity that the people the leader intimidates does not have.

The first and most paramount form of abuse is when leaders become bullies. In its extreme form the bullying leader uses sarcasm, yelling, physical violence and manhandling of subordinates.

In the name of performance, the bully humiliates, violates and intimidates the staff until he or she chooses to stay away from the reach of the leader.

Some other leaders use manipulation to abuse and violate their subordinates. They start by putting emphasis on a purported promotion. That promise of promotion lures the staff into long hours of work. When the time comes to make the promise good, the manipulative boss reneges, meanwhile he has achieved his desires for additional productivity or meeting a deadline. Manipulation takes other forms; keeping the people under a leader uninformed, without any mentoring or training so that no one rises above him.

8. DEFICIENCY IN PROBLEM SOLVING SKILLS

"The significant problems we face cannot be solved at the same level of thinking we were at when we created them."
—Albert Einstein

We must remember that one determined person can make a significant difference, and that a small group of determined people can change the course of history. Sonia Johnson

A deficiency in problem solving skills results in the exacerbation of small problems. In certain parts of the world, especially the third world, this weakness in leadership happens when politicians or local leaders believe their job is not to provide a good environment for business but to fiddle, centralize control, micro-manage and engage in self aggrandizement at the cost of the citizen's welfare.

The true depth of leadership will be exposed in the face challenges. There will be obstacles but some do not show until decisions have been made.

Enhancing your leadership through the ability to solve problems will require a few steps:

a. APPROACH ALL ISSUES WITH CLARITY

A high energy approach to issues will not resolved them. It might become counterproductive. Rather it would be wise to come up with a systematic, clear and logical approach, even if there is limited time to do this. This first step is like the road map to an intended destination.

b. GET CRACKING WITH THE ISSUES.

Once you start focusing on the problem and seeking for solutions, it is important to break down the problem, in order to get to the root of the matter. It is necessary to know the cause and the effect of the issues to develop a robust solution.

c. WORK OUT A PROBLEM SOLVING STRATEGY

Start with an end result in mind. See the result you want to

achieve in your mind and start working towards it. The nature of the problem pre-determines the solution proffered.

d. EXECUTE, EXECUTE, EXECUTE

Following a planned strategy, you should now execute the plan you have conceived. There is nothing like a fail-proof strategy, however it would be good to approach matters with the tried and tested strategy. However, you will need to review your approach and adapt it based on the issue at hand. The execution of your strategy may bring about a change in the dynamics of the matter at hand; this should still not deter you from re-evaluating your approach.

e. CHECK YOUR RESULTS

You have designed an approach to solving problems, it is now important to evaluate the effectiveness of your approach. If the result falls below expectation, then you may need to check your approach. Was there an error in your approach? Were there perspectives to the matter which was hidden from you? Could the error be in the execution and not the approach designed? Several attempts must be made to resolve an issue, rather than give up at the slightest hint of failure. A leader must bear in mind that for problems to be solved qualitatively, his approach must be with a logical, focused and clear mind.

9. POOR COMMUNICATION SKILLS

"You can have brilliant ideas, but if you can't get them across, your ideas won't get you anywhere." —*Lee Iacocca*

Leadership will fail if there is an inability to properly disseminate information that is necessary for the progress of an organization. When leadership fails through bad communication it is often because of assumptions, wanting to assert rights, and the creation of negative communication patterns.

Everything a leader does, communicates; what he encodes and how he encodes it are important.

The communication must be clear, concise, concrete, correct, coherent, complete and courteous because although the leader stands and seems to be in front of everyone else; the people working with him also deserve to be shown respect. Looking at the characteristics of communication in more detail, we said ascertained that it needs to be:

a. CLEAR

The communicator needs to be clear on what he intends to communicate and that it is clear to him. The onus should not be on your listeners or readers to try to make sense of what you want to communicate and draw their own conclusion.

Clarity in communication is achieved when people have an assertive statement which guides them towards an intended goal.

b. CONCISE

Keeping it simple is the beauty of good communication. There is no need to be verbose with words if you can say it in a more precise and shorter way. It is not the length of the sentence but the ability to pack a punch in a short missive.

c. CONCRETE

Concrete communication is making every attempt to leave your audience with the facts. It should also be focused on the main subject.

d. CORRECT

There will be leadership failure if communication is laden or loaded with misinformation, misleading statements and half truths. It is a grievous error to get names, places and figures wrong. Leadership is more than standing in front of people and bellowing commands; it is making every effort to be a good example in all things.

e. COHERENT

It is a gross error to communicate as if you are talking to people on another planet. No soldier will respond to a bugle which makes the wrong sound. Avoid text language as much as possible when writing in your capacity as a leader, because of its likely way of corrupting good communication.

f. COMPLETE

A complete message will have an introduction, a body and a conclusion. The body of the message should be adequate enough for the recipient to act with. Many followers have been often left to act on assumptions and perceived opinions on what they think the leader wants.

g. COURTEOUS

Many leaders have failed because of discourteous communication. Talking down to people reduces productivity, and demotivates them. Being courteous is to be friendly, open, warm and honest without being insulting.

The most major goal of effective communication is to create mutual understanding and find solutions that could be mutually acceptable or beneficial to the various parties.

10. BLIND TO THE CURRENT SITUATION

> "The real distinction is between those who adapt their purposes to reality and those who seek to mold reality in the light of their purposes." ——*Henry Kissinger*

Leadership fails when it buries its head in the sand like the proverbial ostrich; pretending that there are no issues or no challenges at hand until suddenly problems get to the point of no return. Successful leaders are known to make quick decisions, and once the decision is made they set to work immediately.

While commenting on an article entitled "YarAdua and a sick nation" by Okey Ndibe, a blogger wrote "YarAdua's friends and family ought to tell him that…Nigerians…deserve an energetic, intelligent, vibrant, and visionary leader to run their affairs". The comment refers to the late president of Nigeria who was bogged down with kidney problems, and an administration perceived to be inept, inefficient, and saddled with bungling incompetence.

Sometimes when leadership finds itself in this situation it becomes worse if it has succeeded in surrounding itself with empty praise singers.

Being inept and blind to the immediate need of people has cost cities like New Orleans, when the floods came and the government was slow to act.

It's a reminder of leaders like Emperor Nero who was busy entertaining his guests while Rome was burning.

Leadership will fail unless it realizes that the first rule of winning is "don't escape from reality". In order to not get sucked into the challenge of escaping from the reality of the immediate, Jack Welch suggested in his book: Straight From the Gut. That successful leadership must be able to:

a. Control your destiny or someone else will
b. Face reality as it is, not as it was or as you wish it were
c. Be candid with everyone
d. Don't manage, lead
e. Change before you have to
f. If you don't have a competitive advantage, don't compete

11. THE DISCOURAGEMENT OF OTHERS

"People too weak to follow their own dreams Will always find a way to discourage yours." —*Unknown*

Leadership is meant to inspire, encourage, challenge, and provoke people to excellence. It fails when it does the opposite. It discourages others from getting involved in making things happen.

Why do leaders discourage instead of inspiring people to aspire? There may be several reasons, but the ones which seem to stand out are:

a. A DESIRE TO FEEL SPECIAL COMPARED TO OTHERS

Have you ever asked a successful leader how they got to where they are? The answer often starts with some impossible obstacle that they had to overcome to get to where they are. When people who have a multi-million dollar business tell us that they started with nothing, we feel inadequate and unable to match their endurance and tenacity.

b. TOO MUCH STRUGGLE

Some leaders overwhelm you with the statistics of the people who have failed while trying to make it in that chosen field. They reel out the percentage of people who entered that field and the high turnover of failure. Truly, only few people make it to the top in a lot of careers. But there is no evidence that the enquirer will spend as many years trying to make it as those who have gone ahead of him. It is unfair for a leader to assume that it will take others the same number of years it took him before there was a result.

c. SCARCITY CONSCIOUSNESS

A third reason why many leaders discourage the up and coming is the consciousness that there might be job scarcity in that chosen field in the future. Leaders in this category see new comers as competition and therefore do all they can to discourage their 'competitors' possible entrance.

However there are people who have not only achieved leadership success, but are willing to equip others for effective leadership in the future.

Mark Twain said: “Keep away from people who try to belittle your ambitions. Small people always do that, but the really great ones make you feel that you, too, can become great.”

12. A KNOW-IT-ALL ATTITUDE

"The only fool bigger than the person who knows it all is the person who argues with him"—Stanislaw Jerzy Lec

Weak leadership sometimes covers up its ignorance by putting on a know-it-all attitude pretending to have all the answers when it has absolutely none.

A know-it-all attitude makes the leader less caring. It also makes it difficult for a person to be true to the very attributes that made them successful. You might ask how this could be possible; well, the fact is that the very source of a leader's power can also be what draws him into this negative behaviour.

a. Knowledge power

This represents a leader's talent, education, wisdom, abilities and skills. This power resulted in quick elevation for many. However, if left unchecked, it also makes the leader develop a know-it-all attitude. In this frame of mind the failing leader refuses to acknowledge other sources, does not know the subordinates very well, and claims expertise in areas that are a blind spot for him.

b. Attraction power

This is the ability to draw people to yourself because of your warmth, wisdom, physical or charismatic attraction. It easily gets a leader national and global influence and effectiveness. However, this can turn against the leader when he becomes moody, aloof, arrogant and self absorbed.

c. Expressive power

Many have attained to positions of repute because of their oratorical and communicative skills. The power of eloquence through writing, speaking and poetry really increases a leader's influence more than most other sources. However, when the leader begins to have a know-it-all attitude, they talk too much and listen less.

d. Credibility power

A man’s reputation power is drawn from how he is perceived in the community, at work, business and society at large. This power source undergirds and brings greater value to the leader. It also requires a lot of protection. When an arrogant feeling gives the leader the belief that he is larger than life and doesn’t need to give due consideration to the impact of his choices and associations; and that he can go free for almost anything he does; leadership failure becomes inevitable. Leadership must be viewed as a first among equal standpoint not a superior, above the inferior, otherwise a know-it-all attitude will manifest and destroy the effect leadership ought to have. Breaking from this tendency will require an exposure to a variety of ideas, people, and opinions. It is important that you act, or else you will choke your own success.

13. NEVER ROCK THE BOAT

> “The person who risks nothing, does nothing, has nothing, is nothing, and becomes nothing. He may avoid suffering and sorrow, but he simply cannot learn and feel and change and grow and love and live*.”— Leo F. Buscaglia*

Failure is inevitable when leadership settles for the regular and the mundane.

The concept of rocking the boat comes from the idea of the impact a team of people rowing a boat can make. If each occupant rows at a different speed there is the possibility that the boat will be rocked.

Rocking the boat to some people who like things steady and continuous could be perceived as causing trouble or disturbance within a group. This language is used especially when you try to bring a change to a situation that most people think does not need a change.

Steps towards overcoming this tendency must begin with a deliberate desire to:

1. Rebuke yourself and colleagues from comfort zones. Success has a way of sucking you into the zone of over celebrating past achievements. Progress is possible as you continue to challenge yourself.

2. Rock the boat by constantly challenging yourself to grow. It is important to raise the bar if you must avoid complacency.

3. Rocking the boat also suggests taking risks, doing things which look crazy to those who like the predictable life.

4. Innovate. Stability is good for business, but the demands on leadership of the 21st century is to push the boundaries and do something new. Innovation in this context is either the birthing of a new idea or a wholesome re-invention of what can put your organization in front and be of value to your customers.

5. Augment. Take new ideas and run wild with them.

6. Consolidate. Once you step out with an innovation that will change things in an organization, you will need to consolidate the grounds you have gained so that there is no reversal to the status quo. This can be achieved as you consolidate power, processes, and systems. These actions will help to break the cycle of pulling the wagons of leadership in a circle.

So many leaders have refused to proffer change because of the fear of being perceived as a trouble maker. However if things are not disrupted, if things are done in the name of harmony - even when it is apparent to everyone that there is need for a change - leadership will end up failing.

14. SABOTAGING THE SUCCESS OF OTHER PEOPLE

> “They put on a front that appears accommodating, loyal, and yes, even sacrificial. Then, without warning, they raise their knife, and by the time you see the glint of the blade, it's almost always too late.”— *Les Parrott*

Sabotage is a deliberate act carried out to destroy, obstruct or hinder other persons.

It is a wilful destruction undermining, countermining or counteracting the good deeds of other people in order to make them look bad.

It sounds ludicrous that a leader will work towards the sabotage of his own team, but this happens. Some of the cases are deliberate while others are actions which end up spelling out sabotage on the part of the leader towards his direct reports or team members. Let us examine actions which are tantamount to sabotage. Some of them have been mentioned under other reasons for leadership failure:

a. Incorrect diagnosis of problems

Failing leaders have a habit of putting the blame for under-performance and high staff turnover at the doorstep of lazy or bad employees. High staff turnover is often because of the poor management style of the leader.

b. Projecting a negative vision

Vision is the tool for propelling an organization forward. It is projected to the followership in three ways; positive vision, maintaining status quo, or a negative outlook. The success of the organization and the people will be sabotaged if the leader becomes negative about the future of the organization. It is very hard to be successful in an atmosphere where you are told tomorrow will be worse than today.

c. Disrespectful communication

Words have power. They can convey vision and make demotivated people feel like they are alive again. Conversely, people feel deflated when the leader uses foul language, barks orders, threatens or speaks in

a condescending manner.

d. Withholding recognition

It is easy for squeaky wheels to get the most attention. Failing leaders sabotage their people by overlooking conscientious and hard working staff while they complain when there are mistakes. People need to know what they are doing well, so they can be better at it.

e. Displaying conflicting values

Acting in a way that conflicts with the values the leader purports to hold impacts the followership in a negative way and sabotages their success. People tend to affirm the behaviours they observe.

f. Staying on

Imagine a leader who has lost hope in the future of the organization where he is supposed to be part of. He no longer believes in the department he heads, and takes delight in telling everyone how the place is hopeless. The irony of it is that he never resigns or moves away. Instead of inspiring vision and helping to raise great leaders of the future, he becomes toxic and pollutes other minds.

When a leader takes this view or angle, he has failed in his responsibility.

Using a method which subverts and weakens those who serve under us or with us is not a proof of strength or quality leadership; it is proof that leadership has failed.

15. GETTING OTHERS TO DO WHAT THEY ARE UNWILLING TO DO

"Setting an example is not the main means of influencing another, it is the only means."—*Albert Einstein*

The basic meaning of leading is to show the way by going ahead in advance to guide or direct in a chorus. Leading is to serve as a route for others to take; to be the channel or conduit others see and feel inspired to follow.

There are various reasons why being the example and the first to do things is a way to enhance leadership:

a. People need a sample. People always need someone they can benchmark against. A lack of example leaves people confused and dissuades them from following.

b. People need to be challenged to confidence. Organizations pontificate on the need for achieving goals but they fail to realize the power of leading by example. It is easier to build confidence and follow a leader who does things first before asking others to do so.

c. If the leader does not do it, nobody will. It is an utter misconception to come up with a vision and simply expect it to be implemented by others. If you do not initiate the implementation, the chances of it being carried out are zero.

d. The leader must start it or it will never be started. Setting the standards and rules as a leader is not enough. The implementation is best if the leader who set the rules also sets the standard for best practice.True leaders are followed because they create the pathway, and become pathfinders on matters which others have never attempted before. They become the beacon of light to help others out of their ignorance and darkness.

When a leader fails to show which way to do a thing but rather only

tells people what to do, there will be leadership failure.

16. DICTATORIAL LEADERSHIP: INTIMIDATING, THREATENING AND USING ULTIMATUMS

> “It is a paradox that every dictator has climbed to power on the ladder of free speech. Immediately on attaining power each dictator has suppressed all free speech except his own.”—*Herbert Hoover*

The use of the word dictatorship brings images of leaders like; Hitler, Saddam Hussein, Josef Stalin or Fidel Castro to our minds.

How do you know if a leader is turning into a dictator? By the brute force he uses to motivate.

Firstly, he solicits, secures and uses his absolute power. Absolute power they say corrupts absolutely.

Secondly, dictators promote genocide. In other words, the destruction of as many or almost all people as long as their desire is established.

The aforementioned were known to have made chemicals for the destruction of people, including those whom they governed.

Thirdly, they like to create an atmosphere of group affirmation. It is either everyone dressing the way they want as in the case of Saddam Hussein where almost everyone in the republican army had a certain type of moustache. In Hitler’s day everyone wore a brown shirt; in the days of Mussolini everyone wore a black shirt.

In North Korea, when people laughed they laughed en masse and when they cried, particularly at the loss of their dictatorial leader, there was mass weeping.

Dictators are also essentially eccentric; however the final words on the lips of a dictator is ME ME ME. They have the characteristic of being egocentric.

17. THEY DO NOT LISTEN FOR FEEDBACK FROM THE FOLLOWERSHIP

"The ear of the leader must ring with the voices of the people."
—*Woodrow Wilson*

Leadership fails when it fails to seek feedback; when it refuses to seek and receive feedback.

Feedback is input on our work, it could be as simple as a short verbal comment that makes us know what is going on. Feedback will help the leader know if he is achieving his goal, will help him know if he is truly on course, and it will help him know if the followership understands his role as leader.

Finally, it will give the leader an understanding if he is making the appropriate impact.

To serve or lead without feedback is to seem as if you are on an important journey without a map or signpost, and when you are being warned that you are off course, you ignore all the warning signs. Leadership will fail with such an attitude.

The most appropriate thing to do is to ask questions, such as:

- Why am I a leader?
- What am I supposed to achieve?
- How is my performance tracking?
- What is the best use of my time?
- How am I influencing others?
- What is the quality of my relationship with the followership?
- How am I serving my team members?

18. THEY AVOID DIFFERENT OPINIONS

> “It is not best that we should all think alike; it is a difference of opinion that makes horse races.”—*Mark Twain*

Holding different opinions or potential conflict does not make them go away. Sometimes a difference of opinion can highlight a view the leader may not have considered and this could be important for the progress of the organization.

Leaders who are unable to hear a different opinion have set themselves in motion for failure.

To improve a situation, there must be a change from an attitude of US against THEM to a situation where the leader establishes a “WE” mindset that will allow him to embrace new or shared perspectives.

Furthermore, in order to avoid the action that leads to failure, a leader can identify an alignment in the values he and the people he leads holds, to forestall a situation where he is being perceived as avoiding a difference of opinion.

A leader can ask questions like “how do we want to treat each other during our conversations on this matter?” and “how can we find out what values our opinions will create?” Rather than taking sides in an argument that may end up being futile and unfruitful.

19. FUZZY VISION

Have you ever looked through a lens or camera when it is not well focused? The image appears fuzzy and if the picture is taken the image will most likely be fuzzy too.

The leader whose vision and perspective of the future is unclear will lead his people to the realms of failure. Clarity is what allows one to communicate visions effectively, without it, it is hard to answer even the most basic questions about what you are out to achieve and why.

A fuzzy vision makes you unable to answer what your business is out to do and why you are in business. A fuzzy vision means you cannot precisely articulate where you are going, nor can you persuade your customers, partners or investors to believe in what you are doing. When this is the case, leadership fails.

It is important to be able to effectively communicate vision. What distinguishes failed leaders and effective ones is that magnetic quality in successful leaders that enables them to effectively communicate their vision.

When the vision of the leader is clear, and communicated to the organization, it facilitates the atmosphere for success.

a. A clear vision will help the people to embrace change and adapt their jobs accordingly

b. In an atmosphere where the vision is made plain by the leader, the workers are able to discuss issues openly.

c . The morale of the people involved with the leader is high, while the staff turnover is low.

d. The measurement of performance is based on the team spirit and not mere individual drive.

Fuzzy leadership paralyses progress, and causes issues to be swept under the carpet for fear of conflict and arguments.

Kodak, the photography company, went digital in the 80s and became a phenomenal success. However its attempt to give a huge part of its re-

organization over to a new management system made its original vision unfocused. . The end result was a disaster; Kodak is right now in receivership; having declared itself bankrupt. It is unimaginable that a business with an annual turnover of $20 billion could head for such a disaster.

20. LACK OF LEADERSHIP SKILLS

"If the blind lead the blind, both shall fall in the ditch."—*Jesus Christ*

In his book Twelfth Knight, Shakespeare said: “some are born great, some achieve greatness and some have greatness thrust upon them.”

True as this may be, it could be the reason why many people fail in leadership particularly where greatness or leadership, is thrust upon them.

People assume leadership of nations by default because they occupy certain roles in the political party that is in the majority. So, leadership becomes a functional opportunity; for others it is a mere position.

A person who finds himself occupying a position of leadership as a function or opportunity thrust upon them, may not have come to that post with the skill that is necessary to make it a success.

The irony for failure in leadership is that while all leaders have the ability to manage, only a small proportion of people who are managers have the necessary skills to become strong leaders. This inability stifles business and results in failure because the person who is most likely to climb the ladder of leadership is the one who has grown through the ranks.

21. DISCOURAGING CULTURE

"With time and patience, the mulberry leaf becomes satin. With time and patience the mulberry leaf becomes a silk gown."—*Chinese Proverb*

Leadership fails when the person at the helm of affairs, along with the system they operate in becomes bogged down in corporate cultures that do not inspire.

They fail when there are no shared values and employees are not energized. They are bogged down in the culture of blame and they do not celebrate diversity.

22. LACK OF INITIATIVE

> “Success depends in a very large measure upon individual initiative and exertion, and cannot be achieved except by a dint of hard work.” *—Anna Pavlova*

> "There are three types of people in this world: those who make things happen, those who watch things happen, and those who wonder what happened." *—Mary Kay Ash*

Taking the initiative is a fundamental leadership qualification and an indicator of competence. You will stand out if you do not merely settle for the regular way of doing things, but think outside of the box and ask questions like “why not?” when others are asking “why?” True leaders choose their work; the work does not choose them. Such people settle for the work they like, where they can distinguish themselves. If the work is not forthcoming, leaders with initiative create it.

a. Taking the initiative will mean selecting and influencing the place in which you work, rather than reacting to situations created by others.

b. The leader with initiative works to change their circumstances and themselves for the better.

c. True leaders will create a vision, set the goals that will make the vision possible and inspire the action that will lead to the fulfilment of the vision.

d. It means operating beyond comfort zones and setting “stretch” goals that will enable the leader and his co-workers develop new skills.

e. Leaders must build a lot of self confidence. Without it you will be afraid of the negative feedback from those who disagree with your actions and decisions.

f. Take the initiative by responding quickly to the opportunities spotted by your colleagues, and or the observations of your customers.

g. Leaders will initiate the use of their organization’s core competence to bring solutions to new clients.

h. Use your initiative as a leader to analyze your ideas before presenting it to others. Do a cost/benefit analysis. Check out the risk and impact analysis before others do.

Taking the initiative has several benefits among which are: improved products and services, a lot of enhancement for the organization and the job, the job is made easier and better and increasing the chances of success for individuals and the corporate body.

Leadership with initiative is an absolute necessity for progress. If imitative is missing, the employees or followers are not empowered; there is poor motivation. The people end up feeling as though their contribution is unnecessary. This is a mark of leadership that is doomed to fail.

One of the things which marks out a leader as separate from the manager is the ability to initiate or innovate. Managers tend to maintain the status quo.

Leadership fails when it is unable to initiate a dream, a vision, or a project that will move the organization forward.

23. HIGH BUREAUCRACY

"Bureaucracy defends the status quo long past the time when the quo has lost its status." —*Laurence*.*J. Peter*

Many organizations discourage creative thinking; they create so many layers of challenges and approval methods; as a result those who want to move the organization forward feel discouraged. The system which was designed to help the organization achieve, ends up being the broken cog in its own wheel.

An organization is considered bureaucratic, when its customers or target market perceive that its services are enveloped in red tape. The policies are inflexible and no longer satisfy the customers. Everyone is made to fit in the same box and treated alike. This may be because everyone is just a number and are not treated as individuals.

At its highest level, bureaucracy foments political infighting, with executives striving for personal power and advancement. It makes various departments fail to cooperate with other departments, and in some cases ideas are killed because they come from "the wrong person"; while the same idea would be supported if it were from "the right person."

In highly bureaucratic settings, leaders hoard information and use it as a source of power. If information is released, it is used selectively or distorted to make a failing leader's department look better.

In this setting, mistakes are denied, covered up or hidden. Failing leaders play the blame game, shifting their errors on other people. The popular aspect of bureaucracy which is known the world over is how larger and larger number of people make decisions, this means that no one is really held responsible for the decision or the outcome

When a leader is high on bureaucracy and low on vision; leadership is bound to fail.

Preventing failure for the organization and the leader is possible. This will be as the leader:

a. Seeks professional help External people are good when you want to initiate change. Subsequently the new approach will have to be owned by the people in the system in order to be effective.

b. Strives for continuous improvement The use of continuous improvement, as opposed to a traditional managerial system will multiply the amount of change and enhance the quality of output of the organization. A commitment to improvement will make the company attract new blood and trigger the reduction or removal of bureaucracy.

c. Envisions the future Paint a picture of the desired future for the organization and begin to work towards it. Making the change possible may require consulting widely with the stakeholders; customers and management.

24. POOR KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

> “Information is a source of learning. But unless it is organized, processed, and available to the right people in a format for decision making, it is a burden, not a benefit.”—*William Pollard*

The topography of business corporations, countries and organizations has changed because of the availability of knowledge. However, this knowledge needs to be properly harnessed and managed.

Knowledge management is that discipline which enables teams, and entire organizations, to collectively and systematically share, create and apply knowledge to enable a better achievement of goals. It is a necessary part of today’s leadership because it is no use doing the same thing every day without capturing and distributing the knowledge gained. The following should be considered:

a. Making knowledge management worthwhile requires knowing what information needs to be managed and for what performance end.

b. It would mean capturing information which is necessary for the progress of the organization and making it available for use. This allows everyone in the system to access the appropriate information.

c. Bring the people, processes, work culture and the enabling technology together, to achieve a wholesome avenue of knowledge.

Several factors seem to be driving the need to manage knowledge, paramount among them is the fact that today’s work environment is becoming increasingly complex and saddled with issues that have never been dealt with before.

Knowledge management is also necessary because of the tendency for middle and top management to operate without applying knowledge management.

He who has the appropriate, current and most relevant information will always be in front. However it is not enough to have information it is important to be able to capture and transfer this knowledge and prevent its loss.

One telephone conversation could mean the transferring of information that could potentially provide multi-millions for a company.

Good leaders of the 21st century will create a knowledge base for creative ideas and a system for managing the knowledge, ideas and strategies that are generated so that it is not stolen or misused.

When leadership lacks or fails in its capacity or ability to do this, then leadership has failed.

25. POOR TEAM WORK

> “Conflict is inevitable in a team ... in fact, to achieve synergistic solutions, a variety of ideas and approaches are needed. These are the ingredients for conflict.”—*Susan Gerke*

There are several styles of leadership including:

- Transactional
- Transformational
- Autocratic
- Laissez faire
- Free rein
- Charismatic

Whatever method a leader chooses to adopt, it must go hand in hand with a commitment to team work. When a team has not been able to operate effectively after it has been formed; it still comes down to the quality of leadership at the helm of leading this team.

Signs of bad teamwork are friction and disagreements, falling behind on deadlines, an inability to meet targets, and focusing attention and energy on other objectives.

Teamwork suffers when complaints and gossip from various sources are heard by team members. However, this will not have a great impact if the leadership is strong but Where there is poor leadership, rules will be unclear, the goals of the team will be unclear, training will be inadequate, there will be differences in work style and poor planning. When all this happens, leadership has failed.

26. FAILING LEADERS CREATE A SYSTEM OF CONFUSION

“Order is never observed; it is disorder that attracts attention because it is awkward and intrusive.”—*Eliphas Levi*

When this happens, in the end the left does not know what the right is doing. It is interesting to note that in certain cases the atmosphere of confusion and chaos deliberately created by the leadership in order to control everyone and have the final say. When this happens leadership still has failed.

27. POOR CROSS-FUNCTIONAL COLLABORATION

"It is the long history of humankind (and animal kind, too) those who learned to collaborate and improvise most effectively have prevailed."—*Charles Darwin*

As organizations grow, functions become multiple and as this happens it becomes necessary to know how to synchronize the various functions and create a wholesome atmosphere of success. The world in which we live is now complex. Nothing seems as it used to, such complexity requires the application of a wide range of approaches, skills, ideas and perspectives.

The skill to manage a multiple level organization is a determining factor for a manager. For example, when transitioning from managing a segment of a business to carrying differing opinions, teams, and people along.

The old functional method centralized power, knowledge and skill in the manager or leader. Hierarchy and superiority on the basis of age or year of service is still holding many organizations back from maximizing opportunities.

To avoid leadership failure, a step in the right direction would be to form cross management teams, drawn from the various departments, e.g. Engineering, Research, Marketing, Finance and Human Resources. They would be responsible for:

a. Social collaboration and the creation of concepts

b. The creation of new designs and products for the organisation

c. The team helps the transitions needed. i.e. technology

d. The team collaborates to control the cost of production and improve the profit level

The formation of a team is no guarantee of success. The potential members need to have the required skill for reform, the political connection and the will to carry through the charter. They must also be able to work together. The ability to work together would sometimes be

predicated upon, the ground rules agreed.

That as it may, throwing people together from various departments may not achieve the collaboration desired, an effective team would have to be the function of effective training and preparation.

You can only move the organization forward by developing a mindset which carries everyone along; the creation of a cross functional management committee.

28. GREED

"Greed is the inventor of injustice as well as the current enforcer."— *Julian Casablancas*

Greed manifests as an insatiable desire for control, manipulation and domination.

Powerful leaders have often been seen to find ways to do what seems to be in their own best interest rather than the common good. This has no other name than greed.

Greed is the selfish pursuit of money, wealth, power or possession especially when this denies the same goods to others. This pursuit is beyond what an individual needs and becomes an imbalance to other needs.

Greed in leadership is the reason why a leader pays crumbs to workers and still feels that his dog should earn better.

Greed can manifest in different ways; exploiting workers to reap management rewards is greed in leadership. When a leader is working for greedy self interest, he finds it hard to work with a greater vision that would bring a change to those he leads.

Greed makes a poor leader say: "I am going to get mine, since everyone else is and besides I deserve it". In effect, greedy leadership stinks whether it is on Wall Street or Broad Street.

A leader who does not want to fail through this particular monster will have to create an atmosphere for intense oversight and accountability. Greed was at the root of the challenges of the Enron Corporation and WorldCom incorporated, where Bernie Ebbers was knee deep in fraud and deception. The same goes for Dennis Kozlowski former CEO of Tyco International Limited.

29. THE EAGERNESS TO PLEASE

> "Those who have virtue always in their mouths, and neglect it in practice, are like a harp, which emits a sound pleasing to others, while itself is insensible of the music."—*Diogenes*

This cause of failure in leadership stems from the previous subject dealt with; a sense of insecurity. It makes such a leader to want to win because they see their service or cause as a popularity contest. If there is no one to contest with they seem to do it with their own alter ego.

The desire to please people makes a leader miss out on pleasing the right people. The chief reason for trying to please is the strong desire for approval. It all begins with the childhood setting, where the compliance with the wishes and desires of others has created an addiction for approval. They become what they think other people want them to be.

Once they grow into adulthood the habit continues with dozens of variations. At its most extreme the people pleaser becomes a 'doormat' or pushover. Ironically, being a pushover gives them the feeling of security and alleviates their social insecurities.

Leadership failure is inevitable with this tendency because it tends to make the leader spineless. An uncontrolled eagerness to please will lead to loss of integrity, identity, self respect, self esteem and could result in self belittling.

How do you break free from the people pleasing syndrome?

a. The first step is to know how to say No without feeling guilty. What is the use of having the entire relations of your spouse in your home at Christmas, when it makes you unhappy?

b. Set boundaries What do you consider to be the farthest a person can go before you say no? accepting the unacceptable, making the abnormal look normal, and tolerating the intolerable will make people push the boundaries you set and violate you. Label the actions you consider unacceptable and set the limits on people's behaviour.

c. You have a choice. Never leave yourself without a choice. Part of that choice is the ability to turn down some requests.

d. Do not be manipulated. It is important to watch out for manipulators and those who flatter. Flatterers will deliberately praise you, so that you will be obliged to please them. Before you know it, you are either deciding to please them, or they make decisions for you.

e. Be emphatic. Make sure you are heard and understood to be saying no to what will please others and displease you.

f. Empty apologies.

People pleasers have a habit for apologizing for what they do not seem to be guilty of. The leader needs to truly ask himself if he was responsible for any wrong. If the answer is no, do not apologise.

30. PERFECTIONISM

“But I am learning that perfection isn't what matters. In fact, it's the very thing that can destroy you if you let it.”— *Emily Giffin*

Perfectionism becomes a reason for leadership failure because it makes the individual focus on things to the point of micro managing. It is not to be mistaken for being perfect or doing things perfectly, rather it involves putting oneself under pressure to meet high standards, which then powerfully influences the way we think about ourselves.

Perfectionism may mean focusing so much attention on things that do not have a major consequence when it comes to the total vision of the leader.

Perfectionism is a relentless travel for extremely high standards, even when they are almost unattainable. It is judging yourself largely on your ability to achieve an unachievable standard.

Perfectionism may be demanding standards and continuing to pursue them even if the cost is huge emotionally, financially, physically and relationally.

Though few people will assume or agree that they are perfectionists they may say things like:

- “I like being very organized, very efficient”
- “I like being prepared for every event and get satisfaction in knowing that I have tried my hardest, it makes me feel special”
- “I like to do things very well”
- “I get pleasure from achieving things that others cannot do”

The paradox of perfectionism is that while the leader is focused on trying to do things excellently, they create an atmosphere for those who work with them that is unhealthy, unhelpful and often times in the end misses the main matter.

It brings to mind the story of the captain and his co-pilot who were about to land a plane and because one little button would not work, they both gave it their fullest attention even though it would not have stopped the plane from landing. They were so focused on the button and never

knew that they were about to crash; by the time they realized it was too late.

31. ARROGANCE

> “Love measures our stature: the more we love, the bigger we are. There is no smaller package in all the world than that of a man all wrapped up in himself.” —*William Sloane Coffin*

Arrogant leadership is about those who believe they are superior to everyone else. It may not be said in words but the actions of the leader who sets himself up for failure says they he is right and everyone else is wrong. It is a delusional belief that they are better than anyone else.

Leadership arrogance is not self confidence, self confidence manifests in the way you carry yourself; in your interactions and actions. Arrogance exceeds self confidence; it is the belief of an arrogant leader that because of his talent, ideas and results he is superior to everyone else.

While self confidence is necessary for leadership success, arrogance is a danger because it alienates staff, it constricts your success and it negates your impact.

Arrogant people tell others what they want to hear; humble people serve higher purposes. Humble leaders put organizational success before their own. Arrogant leaders put their own success before the organization.

Arrogant leaders emphasis their responsibilities; they don’t have time for people, they have time for themselves. Arrogant leaders are more focused on what they will get than on what they will give. They are more focused on who serves them, than on who they serve.

Arrogant leaders brag about themselves; they blame everyone around them instead of taking responsibility

32. POWER

> “It is a mistake, that a lust for power is the mark of a great mind; for even the weakest have been captivated by it; and for minds of the highest order, it has no charms.”—*Charles Caleb Colton*

The use of power is one of the most delicate subjects when it comes to success or failure of leadership. In best practice, it can be used judiciously and for worthy goals. However, when it goes wrong it can be abused and used to hurt the followership. Either way, leaders must understand the power they possess.

The appropriate use of power will motivate, challenge, provoke and even raise new leaders. When power is used to dominate people in order to get the job done, leadership has failed. When a leader has to use physical violence including throwing things or hitting people, then leadership has gone wrong.

Then there is the abuser of power. This person uses power to manipulate through psychological control of peoples’ minds. This is done by making false promises and making claims that cannot be substantiated.

This may be the context in which Lord Acton said: “power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely.”

In most organizations, there are two strands of power; Position Power and Personal Power.

Leaders have position power given to them by virtue of the organization they lead. Personal power is about the degree of influence the individual has or has been given by the followership.

That is why you may have a President of a corporation, organization or country who has positional power but lacks personal power. The abuse of power begins where a person has positional power but lacks personal power and has to make up for it. This results in shouting, screaming, making unreasonable demands, being a time thief of the staff, acting in a manner that is intimidating or setting unreasonably high levels of expectation. When a leader slips into this behaviour it may not even be the power that has corrupted them but the fear of losing power.

33. ALOOFNESS

> “Mediocrity requires aloofness to preserve its dignity.”—*Charles G. Dawes*

Aloofness causes failure in leadership because it makes the individual behave in a distant manner, physically or emotionally. It gives the impression that such a person, particularly a leader, is cold, uninterested and appears to be above the fray.

It is hard to lead with such a tendency because among many manifestations, an aloof person has mood swings and self condemning tendencies when things go wrong. This can be accompanied by frequent sadness, loneliness or resentment. Their behaviour is a thing of concern for their mentors, family members and sometimes their protégés.

In all, aloof people tend to engage in what will reduce their social interactions. They are the types of people who keep acquiring degrees, stay glued to their computer, or are excessive bookworms. They swing between being stone-cold emotionally to being intensely angry.

Why do leaders become aloof?

The behaviours people exhibit are formed over a lifetime, the position they attain does not take away the past. As a matter of fact previous experience tends to poke into the future. Leaders tend to be aloof because of:

a. Shameful experiences of the past that may have left the leader with a degree of emotional damage.

b. Fitting poorly into the family in which the leader was brought up.

c. The leader may have been publicly embarrassed for a previous poor performance.

d. Unexpected changes in the family life can cause disruption to his approach.

e. A highly competitive, critical or hostile environment may be difficult for some people to handle. Some leaders lose their nerve and confidence at such times.

f. There is the leader who is withdrawn, avoidant, and excessively reactive. There will be leadership failure if the tendency of such leaders persists.

g. Aloofness is also a product of a very controlled childhood. Some grew in the atmosphere of frequent parental criticism and deliberate embarrassment as a way of enforcing obedience and excessive parental control.

Leaders who are aloof give the impression that they are indifferent to everybody's needs. It is very hard to lead people if you lack passion and show dullness or cluelessness. If you are emotionless or half hearted you may win by a popular vote but once you show aloofness you have separated yourself from the very people who you are supposed to carry along with you. Those whom you are meant to take to the picture you painted before them.

34. PARANOIA

> “This is a do-it-yourself test for paranoia: you know you've got it when you can't think of anything that's your fault.”— *Robert M. Hutchins*

Leadership fails when it becomes paranoid. This negative tendency is expressed in different ways.

Some leaders become so paranoid that they believe bad things will always happen; it is just a matter of time. They believe it’s not a matter of IF, it’s a matter of WHEN.

This tendency is not only found with new leaders, sometimes high performing leaders are always thinking ‘what if the negative happens’. They think about and anticipate the days of bad things. This feeling makes the leader brood over an eventuality that may never happen, or that is not even in sight.

It is not only about an event, paranoid leaders never trust anyone, they do not believe there is any such thing as loyalty. They anticipate that even the closest and most loyal will one day become disloyal. This tendency makes the leader the devil’s advocate; always rolling out a negative to confront the positive and major things they are doing. Paranoia in leadership can tilt a good leader to the point of no return and make their “what ifs” become a major trap that make them go off the rails.

Paranoia is the dark side of the leader; it can push him over the wall and set him up for errors of judgement. Paranoia makes you suspicious of your own staff, and creates imaginary enemies. Paranoid leaders are also often in denial, never admitting failures or mistakes. A good example of this tendency was Richard Nixon; he fought imaginary enemies all of his life. He kept himself busy gathering a dossier on his supposed enemies. It was one of his paranoid pursuits of his enemies that led to the notorious Watergate scandal.

Paranoid leaders also suffer from pathological jealousy. It is hard for them to see a colleague or associate receive the accolade or appreciation. They feel that such a subordinate is there to outshine them, undermine their leadership and take away their glory. This tends to prompt them to start a process or put a system in place to checkmate their supposedly popular subordinate or associate.

For the paranoid leader, everything you do or say has a connotation, you are left with no choice but to pick your words and tiptoe around them. They run their organization with an iron fist, demanding ultimate loyalty, and running extraordinary meetings to ensure everyone is towing their line.

35. NARCISSISM

> “The sadistic narcissist perceives himself as Godlike, ruthless and devoid of scruples, capricious and unfathomable, emotionless and non-sexual, omniscient, omnipotent and omni-present, a plague, a devastation, an inescapable verdict.” —*Sam Vaknin*

The interesting truth is that people who are paranoid and a narcissist are common in leadership teams, and they often come as the ones ahead of the pack.

At the root of the narcissistic attitude or complex is a feeling of inferiority. However a person exhibiting this behaviour will actually present a superior attitude in order to make other people believe that through their actions and pretence, they are superior to everyone.

Narcissus is the man in Greek mythology who goes to the well and falls in love with the image he saw in the water. It was actually his own face in the reflection.

Narcissist leaders have a notion of grandeur and self importance; they are perpetually in need of admiration while on the other hand they show no sympathy or empathy for others. They overestimate their own abilities and inflict the tales of whatever they have accomplished on others.

In certain settings they are title seekers; perpetually requesting for more of them to be given.

What makes this kind of leader end up failing people is that it is not possible to maintain his narcissistic behaviour without finding co-dependents who perpetually feed his ego. He therefore raises a form of followership not leadership, who provide him with the cravings of his ego.

Leadership goes wrong when, like the naked emperor, the narcissist expects everyone to tell him that he is well dressed.

36. MELODRAMA

> “The constraints of melodrama can be a great blessing, because they demand that all the characters involved - as absurd and extreme as they may initially seem - must stay utterly rooted in their own reality, or the whole project collapses.”— *Stanley Tucci*

Next to the attitude of narcissism is melodrama, a cartel which results in leadership failure.

Melodramatic leaders always grab the centre of attention. Most leaders who have this tendency exhibit obvious behaviour’s that suggest they are on the path to failure.

Some of the tendencies that are exhibited by them are a lack of focus. The lack of focus is the beginning of failure. While a melodramatic leader can be engaging and outgoing and interpersonally skillful; they are often unable to keep their focus.

Melodramatic leaders are also unable to perform the very act of leadership that makes a leader stand out; that is the developing of other people.

Instead of getting everyone to be focused on the objective of the organization they make their own manners and tendencies everyone’s focus. In the end their subordinates feel unwanted and unneeded.

The possible leader who fits this picture would be the late Muhammad Gaddafi; he had tendencies of being unpredictable and whenever he gave a speech it could turn into non-stop ranting that went on for two to four hours.

In the end he attracted people to his particular style, they served his ego and helped to perpetuate his behaviour. Muhammad Gaddafi also had expectations that were highfalutin and almost unachievable. He dreamt of a united state of Africa – with himself as its leader.

People could not understand why his closest body guards were a group of female beauties. This was all part of his melodramatic scheme. Gaddafi showed up at the United Nations to make his speech, he took the constitution of the United Nations and tore it to shreds in front of everyone. Another melodramatic gesture.

A sudden turnaround of Gaddafi was his warming up to the West; it

made the world seem to think that he had changed and was now ready to work with everyone. He never snapped out of his melodramatic approach; if it led to failure or not history has all that to prove.

37. MANIC BEHAVIOUR

> “I still have highs and lows, just like any other person. What's missing is the lack of control over the super highs, which became destructive, and the super lows, which are immediately destructive.”—*Patty Duke*

One of the most deadly reasons why leaders fail is manic behaviour. This is the tendency of the leaders who are obsessively driven to obtain results and in the end crash very badly.

Manic behaviour manifests as hyperactivity, increased energy and heightened mood and when it is left untreated, people’s judgement become impaired resulting in reckless and dangerous behaviour.

They tend to believe that they can always make a come-back; that they are larger than life and can achieve almost anything they set their minds to. Overwhelming confusion replaces clarity and they stop keeping up with what they promise to achieve.

Manic behaviour at its most extreme alienates people and makes friends become frightened. It makes the person who is in this state become irritable, angry, frightened, uncontrollable and trapped in their uncommon drive. Such a leader goes after such thrill seeking activities that they exhibit risky behaviour until they suddenly crash. When leadership takes this turn, it is doomed for failure.

38. HAVING NO MEASURABLE OBJECTIVE

"Failure comes only when we forget our ideals and objectives and principles." —*Jawaharlal Nehru*

Leadership fails in this context when the leader paints a picture of an Eldorado without specific measureable milestones.

From accounting to human resources, from the man on the shop floor to the management working with the leader; everyone is in confusion because there is no way to measure if they are on course.

This kind of leader is fond of telling his staff that they will be rewarded if they achieve the objective of the organization. However, everyone is in confusion as to what the objective is.

In this context, it becomes difficult to motivate people when they do not know whether they are going in the right direction, doing well or not. Wherever there is no way of quantifying the objectives of the organization, it will result in leadership failure.

Averting failure will mean that the leader develops a working plan:

a. The plan will have time management at its foundation; a man who cannot manage time will have difficulty managing a life or lives.

b. He prioritizes tasks within his team and ensures that the company or organization's objective is carried out.

c. Focusing on the objectives of the organization, the leader prioritizes the tasks given to the team members.

d. Meeting objectives also requires that a leader knows how to allocate resources to the objectives and stays close to monitor outcomes.

e. Leadership will be effective if the future is predicated upon a clearly defined and detailed business plan.

Once the above are in place, he works with his team to achieve deadlines, or renegotiate dates in advance when necessary.

The failing leader who is changing and becoming objective oriented needs to also develop habits that will help him make his new found

approach continuous. He needs to set challenging goals that will stretch him and his team; goals that align with the objective of the organization.

39. THE TRAP OF QUICK SUCCESS

"Success comes before work only in the dictionary"
—*Anonymous.*

It is the aspiration of every leader to have a big break and rise to the highest height of their work.

This is very good however a leader may be swept under the carpet of quick success if they do not realize the consequences of such accelerated growth. This is because with quick and astronomical growth comes extra finance, opportunities, access, etc. when this happens many leaders have found themselves trapped in giving themselves to extravagance, instability and irresponsibility.

The likely trap of quick success is the intoxication it brings. A person who wants to avoid the failure of leadership through this challenge must ask himself:

- What is the highest height I want to go to in my career?
- Who do I want to be when I reach that level?
- What do I consider to be no success?
- How will I know when I have enough?
- What are the specific measuring lines for success?
- How much of my personal identity is determined by the benchmarks of success which I have set?

40. BEING SURROUNDED WITH POOR ADVISORS

> “The best advisers, helpers and friends, always are not those who tell us how to act in special cases, but who give us, out of themselves, the ardent spirit and desire to act right, and leave us then, even through many blunders, to find out what our own form of right action is.” —*Phillip Brooks*

In the Good book, the wisest man who ever lived, Solomon, was said to have his wisdom endowed upon him by God. However, at his passage the elders around him asked his son how he intends to rule them. The young man asked for permission to seek advice before he gave them an answer. Unfortunately, he turned to the wrong people and his response was

> The king's answer was harsh and rude. He spurned the counsel of the elders and went with the advice of the younger set, "If you think life under my father was hard, you haven't seen the half of it. My father thrashed you with whips; I'll beat you bloody with chains!"—*1 Kings 12:13-14 (The Holy Bible, MSG)*

With such a response from the young king, he was a failure from day one.

Many leaders have failed possibly because having expressed themselves through a special gift, talent or unusual prominence, they have ended up being surrounded by people who feed their ego and flatter them beyond imagination.

Many have failed because they chose to accept the counsel of men who were greedy for power but uninterested in the welfare of the organization that the leader stands at the helm of.

It was Albert Einstein who said: “an empty stomach is not a good political advisor”. A leader who for example surrounds himself with hungry people will only get the advice or counsel that will in turn make this people’s pockets and stomachs filled.

Consultation is a major step and a good one before reaching some kind of decision in major and minor matters today; but if we have the

wrong advisors the case of the young man (Rehoboam) earlier referred to, could be repeated either on a smaller scale or in a bigger way. He lost the kingdom and his own dynasty.

It is important to qualify who has your ears if leadership is not to result in failure. This is because in the multitude of counselling and that which is a good counselling there is always safety. Not every counsel will help a leader from failing.

“Look for what is missing. Many advisors can tell a president how to improve what is proposed or what is gone amiss. Few are able to see what isn’t there.” Donald Rumsfeld

41. THOSE WHO BETRAY THEIR CONSCIENCE WHEN THE PRICE IS HIGH ENOUGH

"There is no witness so dreadful, no accuser so terrible as the conscience that dwells in the heart of every man."—*Anonymous*

The 1st November 2011 Management Today magazine quotes Oliver Bennett as saying: “A trillion dollars a year are paid globally in bribes, it is a curse and will take more than the bribery act here and tougher laws in the US to sort out”.

Consider the case of Will Mitting, a man who set up a financial magazine in Malawi three years ago and found that he had to make bribes to printers and even payments to get invoices paid. There it is called a tip; if you don’t pay it you’ll be out of the game and you might not get your money. Global corruption has hit the corporate world.

The UK Bribery Act in force since July 2011 has already resulted in certain convictions, so too has the US Foreign Corrupt Practice Act. These two laws go as far as making it a crime punishable at home if any of its citizens were to give or take a bribe abroad.

Recently in the UK, the serious fraud office charged 71 year old Bill Lowther, alleging that he had conspired to pay the school fees of the son of the governor of a Vietnamese state owned bank; he had conspired to pay the school fee at Durham University.

The challenge of the betrayal of conscience is almost everywhere; a common routine in Russia and in most of Africa is for ‘officials’ to pop up after you have negotiated a contract and demand a procurement fee. What do you do when you are made to betray your conscience because the amount to make is so high?

The story is told of the man who was approached by a lobbyist who had boasted that anyone could be bought if their price were met. The man was offered $40,000 and he turned it down, then $50,000, $60,000 and finally the offer was raised to $80,000. At this point the principled man asked that the lobbyist be escorted off the premises. In his words he said: “now be gone, you are getting too near my price”, still buttressing the fact that there is a point when the conscience may not be the most powerful policeman to stop a man from failing because of the betrayal of

his conscience.

42. USING PEOPLE FOR PERSONAL ADVANCEMENT

> “What most people need to learn in life is how to love people and use things instead of using people and loving things”—*Anonymous*

As strange as this may sound it is a common practice on a day by day basis for certain leaders to use their subordinates and even where they are for personal advancement; instead of seeking the welfare of those who serve them.

There are many brilliant leaders who attain a high position; they have a track record of great achievements and success. The only challenge is that after a careful analysis of how they got to where, one may find that they have been using people for their own advancement.

To use people is a grave fault; the leaders who do this look upon others as being inferior to them while they consider their own interest of greater value and the people they use as inconsequential. They go about the act of using people by dominating, humiliating, isolating, intimidating and when that does not work; they apply threats, denial of opportunities or benefits and worse off they pick and choose who they want to promote or help, so the neglected can feel the impact of being set aside. A leader will fail if this is his approach.

For leadership to be truly successful there is a need to recognize the fact that without the assistance of other people greatness may not be truly achieved. No man stands alone; we all stand on the shoulders of other people. The least a leader can show is gratitude for those who have been vision helpers.

Truly a man might have attained to the highest position and feel like a success but indeed part of his punishment is the fact that he is allowed to prosper in his delusion. So when we look for only our own thing and not the interest of other people we have failed in leadership.

> “Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.”—*Philippians 2:4 (The Holy Bible NKJV)*

43. FAILING TO BE AUTHENTIC

> “Don't pretend to be someone your not. It is better to suffer being who you are than it is to suffer trying to be someone that you are not.”—Unknown

An authentic leader is the person who has chosen to live a life of integrity, honesty and forthrightness. Not only are they honest with everyone, they are also true to themselves; they do not deny their humanity neither do they deny their mistakes. They take responsibility for their ways so that they make room for learning and growing. Conversely when a leader goes in the opposite direction of this, our description of his leadership style and person becomes inauthentic and destined to fail.

An authentic leader keeps growing; he adjusts to the conditions that face him on a day by day basis. It is easier for an authentic leader to be honest with the people they come into contact with. This in turn helps them to develop a higher level of trust and goodwill between them and the followership.

In his book Authentic Leadership: courage in action, Bob Terry defines authentic leadership as: “authenticity is knowing and acting on what is true and real inside yourself, your team and your organization and knowing and acting on what is true and real in the world”. “It is not enough to walk one’s talk if one is headed off, or leading one’s organization, community or nation off a cliff”.

So inauthentic leaders make promises they cannot keep, they have hidden agendas and pretend when they are insincere in their motive. When leadership is not authentic it is prone to failure.

44. A BROKEN FOCUS

> “Concentrate all your thoughts upon the work at hand. The sun's rays do not burn until brought to a focus.”— Alexander Graham Bell

When the focus of a leader is broken, danger is inevitable. A broken focus is the beginning of accidents.

Several years ago, I was driving on the motorway. I had an engagement to speak in a city in Africa. It was a long journey, four hours to be precise. Along the way I became hungry and stopped to buy some takeaway food. While driving I was focused on the food that I had placed on the front passenger seat and was eating because of the hunger pangs. In one split moment of focusing on the food and also driving at high speed, I drove off the road and into a ravine; by the time I lifted up my head, instead of seeing the motorway, all I saw was bush ahead. It took some time to get my bearings and realize that one simple act of broken focus had resulted in driving off the road.

Leadership is similar, when our focus is shifted from the important things; leaders simply lose sight of what is necessary and should be done. Remember, by leadership we are talking about people who have distinguished themselves in the past and have had a track record of achievement. They did not get there without thinking big and focusing well but with time as their focus shifts and their thinking becomes less, they begin to make mistakes and shift their focus from what should be the main thing. The laser like focus which brought them to where they are and raised them to the highest level becomes reduced by the trappings of leadership.

This include the danger of micro managing so that they focus on looking nice, being caught in minute details, the apparent presence of wealth and popularity, they become involved in minor decisions that could have been left to others.

The kind of decisions which a leader should have on a list of “don’t dos”; a continuous quest for perfection until the followership is driven off the cliff; the dangerous commitment that leads to the thought that busy means better; the trappings and the obsession with doing rather than becoming, should all be included.

When a leader’s focus is broken he can become a failure. Yes, it is truly important for the leader to be willing, to roll up his sleeves and serve in any capacity where his ability may be needed but his focus can be broken if he is available to do almost everything. To keep your focus it is important to strive, to think on a higher level to make the transition from being a mere doer to a developer of people.

True leadership is not about just the things you can do but the people you can raise and how you can improve the people who follow you. When focus is broken, leadership has failed.

45. POOR COMMUNICATION

"Words should be used as tools of communication and not as a substitute for action."—*Mae West*

The art of communication is the encoding and presentation of a message for it to be decoded by the receiver. It stands on the tripod of a message, the sender and the receiver.

It is a cardinal point and a necessity for quality leadership; followers cannot possibly understand a leader's intention if it has not been properly communicated. Communication will fail and the leadership will also if it is presented within an inappropriate context, without an understanding of the audience, if the thinking behind the communication is muddled and if those to whom the leader is speaking consider him to be the wrong spokesperson.

It is possible for the leader himself not to be clear as to the purpose and vision he carries. This lack of clarity is often times cloaked with confusion and ambiguity in the way it presents information. Many times despite the fact that a leader has not properly communicated, many have deluded themselves into believing that somehow almost through some clairvoyant gift the followers know their wishes and will carry them out. In fact, the opposite is true. Misunderstanding arises and the blame game begins.

The followership as receivers of the message may be unclear as to the purpose of the message presented to them; it may sound illogical or lacking in structure. In the extreme, the receivers may even consider that the message presented is offensive in its tone and non-connecting. Many organizations have experienced failure because a leader has not studied the cultural perceptions of the people who they lead and use that as method for reaching the mind of the followership.

Communication from the leader can also fail if the timing is poor or the style used is ineffective for the particular setting. Communication also fails when the followership questions the ethics behind the message presented. To avoid failure a leader will need to qualify the style of his communication and to whom he is communicating. He may have to break his audience into various levels; the core group, the managerial and the corporate body. What is encoded for each of this group is dependent on

what they need to know and do.

Communication may also be on the basis of who the leader is communicating with. For example: with the core group, what might be effective for the leader may be strategic writing or speaking; for the managerial, appealing to their emotional intelligence, coaching, mentoring, creating teams as well as listening. However for the corporate body which may include all stakeholders, there may be a need for employee relationship, image reputation management. If these approaches are overlooked leadership will fail.

46. RISK AVERSION

> “The person who risks nothing, does nothing, has nothing, is nothing, and becomes nothing. He may avoid suffering and sorrow, but he simply cannot learn and feel and change and grow and love and live.”—*Leo F. Buscaglia*

In general leaders appear to be risk seeking, risk taking people. They are not blind thrill seekers; however leaders take risks and see the route which others avoid as a potential opportunity for making something new happen.

In some ways risk taking distinguishes leaders from managers. There are other differences between leaders and managers:

- Leaders are transformational; managers are transactional.
- Leaders sell; managers tell.
- Leaders are pro-active; managers are reactive.
- Leaders shape; managers enact.
- Leaders have passion, leaders have control, leaders have heart; managers have head.
- Leaders have personal charisma; managers have formal authority.
- Leaders set directions; managers plan the detail.
- Leaders know what is right; managers follow being right.
- Leaders give; managers take. Leaders seek; managers establish.
- Leaders take the blame; managers pass the blame.

However, a leader can find himself on the verge of breakdown because of things not being as progressive as they used to be; he finds himself entertaining the fear of failure rather than the desire to succeed and dwells more on past victories instead of creating new breakthroughs.

They are so afraid of whether they will be able to sustain performances to the level of past achievements.

Many leaders are often looking for what is an encore, trying to repeat

the good old days and the longer a leader is successful, the higher their perception of the cost of failure. Therefore they dig their heels in and take no more risks.

When a leader is driven by fear of failure, he is unable to take the kind of risk that could break new grounds. Leadership is not recklessness, however when a leader is paralyzed by fear, he makes no move and gains no new ground.

A Chinese proverb says “he who is afraid to throw the dice will never throw six”. When leadership becomes risk averse, leadership fails.

47. POOR SELF MANAGEMENT

> “If you had a person in your life treating you the way you treat yourself, you would have gotten rid of them a long time ago...”
> Cheri Huber

Success in leadership brings its own benefits. It gives the leader a level of attention, opportunities, platforms, and open doors; in a lot of cases success in leadership also brings financial benefits, public notoriety, connections and opportunities.

However it goes without saying that one of the things that may be difficult to manage once one becomes successful in leadership is yourself. If you think this is untrue, consider the fact that many are at the very height of their success and also throwing caution to the wind. We are surrounded by the consequences of decisions of executives who were involved in highly questionable ethics in Enron and WorldCom. We remember the doping charges brought against Marion Jones, the Gold medallist; we are perpetually confronted with agonizing accusations of child sex abuse that were brought against certain priests in the Roman Catholic Church. Need I mention the imprisonment of the onetime Mayor of Detroit, Kwame Kilpatrick. It seems to me that many people should have taken a vow that once they reach a level as high as the aforementioned individuals, they will do everything to protect the opportunities they have.

The challenge of poor self management in leadership is the fact that in a lot of cases many leaders are in the state or condition where they have to take care of themselves because no one else will.

If you do not have perceptive followers no one will sense the fatigue or tiredness you are going through. Leaders are also humans; they can be burnt out physically, emotionally, spiritually and psychologically. Leaders are not superheroes who are running on limitless emotional gas. Therefore if the emptiness and tiredness of a leader is not quickly noticed, heeded and handled, both he and the organization he leads may be heading towards a major disaster.

Self management or the preservation of a leader is not selfish but vital to the health of this person at the head of the organization. Leadership will fail if there is no self management procedure which the leader takes

himself through.

How will a leader manage himself?

a. Take the initiative, be the first to volunteer to do certain things in your organization. Be willing to pay a price and serve others.

b. Practice discretion, learn to live by example and know when to say NO.

c. Set goals for your life; physical, emotional, spiritual, mental and financial. Clearly define to yourself what the meaning of life is.

d. Come up with new ideas everyday and use it to stretch your mind, your thoughts and your reach.

e. Be humble and give credit to other people; do not let the size of your ego be equal to the size of the office you occupy; or else if you get out of the office you might crash totally.

f. Believe in the people around you, see the quality in them and then go out and find that quality. This will help you even in your spare time to look for the homeless, the helpless, the poor, the widow and reach out to them. In the process you will feel refreshed and actualized.

g. Reject any form of pessimism; in fact have zero tolerance for negativity and doubts. That way as you keep your optimism high, you are able to achieve even more.

h. Never move away from the why and the why not questions of life. Always have a reason to wonder why. Why do things happen? Why are things the way they are?. Be curious, insatiably curious, question everything.

i. Be a champion of change to the environment, to your neighbourhood, to your country. Don’t be a person who is known for apathy, complacency and boredom. Get excited, be part of the process in turning things around.

j. Care – compassion, sympathy and empathy should clothe your heart so that you reach out and notice the humanity around you. When you are so busy loving life, loving people and refreshing yourself; leadership will no longer be a burden to you but a blessing.

48. A LACK OF PERSONAL GROWTH

"Heaven never helps the man who will not act."—*Sophocles*

The demands of leadership and the challenges which the 21st century leader is accosted with, makes it obvious that there is a need for a perpetual personal growth.

A leader needs to check different aspects of his personal approach to his work and see the area which requires development. If for example, the leader is impatient, this can become a broken cog in the wheel of success for the Leader.

In effect, leaders need a diverse range of approaches to growth. Some need to be street smart along with academic training. The reason for this is because today's leadership comes into contact with a diverse range of people, places and things.

A leader who does nothing to facilitate his own personal development will not change automatically. You will be the same person five years from now unless you are exposed to different sources of personal development. For example, books, seminars, associates, mentors etc.

The man who wants to fly with wings like eagles must not hang around turkeys. Leaders must learn how to hang out with other leaders who are doing well, who are achieving.

Personal growth prevents obsolescence; it renews your vision. It keeps you abreast of facts and gives you a continuous platform for success.

Growth for a leader may not come easily. He may have to look for people who are doing better or breaking new grounds. Ask for the opportunity to hang out with them, for them to be mentors, teach you, partner with you; whatever it takes to grow personally. Leadership fails when it stops growing.

49. A BREACH OF TRUST

"A true friend never breaches the trust of his companion or stabs in his back. He is trustworthy and reliable. One should therefore always try to be a true and reliable friend. "—*Sam Veda*

Regardless of a country, culture or people; in spite of the organization, church or nation, a major requirement for Leadership efficiency is trust. Trust in the Leader, trust in what they say, trust in their ability to deliver what they promise.

If Leadership is about setting an example that others should seek to emulate, one major area where that becomes necessary is that the trust of the people must not be breached. When trust is breached, the credibility of the leader has been seriously damaged.

This is the challenge when revelations begin to flood in about misconduct of leadership, either at corporate level or in small organizations.

When evidences begins to accumulate and suggest that the person or persons who have been called a leader or leaders have actually operated by a two faced approach to life, the eruption of the scandal will create a major destruction or shift in the level of trust. Particularly, if there has not been a disclosure or accountability by the leader.

A most crucial shortage threatening our world today is not money, precious stones, oil or any other physical resource, it is the lack of quality leadership; people who know how to build trust and who show us their transparency. Rather, when people have not walked in a trustworthy manner, they try to hire those who to help to build their image.

Leaders are also humans. In order to build trust and not breach it, it may be wise to:

a.Treat employees, associates and those who are close to the Leader as adults, who are respected enough to be told the truth whether it is bad news or good news; rather than children who cannot be trusted to manage information or who could become traumatised.

b.Allow time for people to assimilate and deal with the upheaval that

may come as a result of such disclosure.

c.It may be wise to cross-train people who will be leaving, with those who will inherit their work so that there is always transparency.

On a personal level a leader would need to:

a. Acknowledge that trust has been broken and not bury their head in the sand like Ostrich.

b. Admit the role that caused the breach of trust. In other words, the leader needs to muster the courage to humble himself and own up to his actions and how his action has affected the organisation.

c. Then apologise, asking for forgiveness and take steps to make amends to whoever may have been offended. Also explaining the reasons why the situation occurred may be helpful for people to truly understand what the leader may have gone through.

d. Then assess where the breach of trust may have taken place. The breach of trust is sometimes shown in the leader not being:

A – Able B – Believable C – Connected or D – Dependable

e. Amend and improve: Do all you can to rebuild trust. Find mentors and those who would create a structure around you to move on from failure to success.

50. INTERPERSONAL INCOMPETENCE

"The people with whom you work reflect your own attitude. If you are suspicious, unfriendly and condescending, you will find theses unlovely traits echoed all about you. But if you are on your best behavior, you will bring out the best in the persons with whom you are going to spend most of your working hours."—*Beatrice Vincent*

Organizations are in the habit of promoting their best Engineers, Managers, Sales persons, Machine Operators, Accountants, Technicians, etc. Once these people have demonstrated a great skill in their chosen field, it leads to the assumption that they can also be good leaders. However, leadership competence is different from the skill they may have demonstrated in their chosen field.

Many are very good in the things they've trained in, or in the gifts they have, but they do not have any leadership training and even where that is provided following the promotion, it still does not guarantee a personal competence in relating to people.

Once these people have been promoted, then it becomes obvious that they are unable to motivate or carry others along. A key element which is the reason for their failure is that their interpersonal skills are failing.

Interpersonal competence starts with a self-awareness; of your personal skills and behaviour and adjusting accordingly to be able to understand others.

Interpersonal competence is further strengthened by building strong lasting mutual and beneficial relationships with other people. It is further enhanced by the developing the ability to resolve conflict in a positive manner. A leader who is detached and unemotional, who does not know how to build bridges with others, cannot be said to be a strong leader and is likely to fail.

To avoid failure, Leadership would require:

a. An understanding of one's self and others too.

b. A building of relationships

c. Developing conflict resolution skills

d. Learning to maintain self-disclosure as a way of allowing people to see the humanity of the leader.

e. Providing emotional support for people so that they know that the leader is truly not there to bark out orders but understands their need and is building bridges towards them.

51. WHEN LEADERSHIP SETS THE WRONG EXAMPLE

> "If you must hold yourself up to your children as an object lesson, hold yourself up as a warning and not as an example."—*George Bernard Shaw*

At the time of the writing of this book, an Italian luxury cruise liner entered shallow waters, hit the rocks and was shipwrecked.

Many passengers died, the majority were rescued. The failure of leadership in this situation was that firstly, the Captain, who had given conflicting reasons for what had happened, was found to have been amongst the first to jump ship to safety. In such circumstances the Captain should have stayed in his boat to supervise the rescue of passengers. He was said to have claimed that he accidentally fell into the rescue boat.

It is an absolute truth that how a leader behaves whether as a parent, organisational head, spiritual or secular will influence the behaviour of other people.

Good examples help us to go further, see further and achieve more. In the words of Isaac Newton: "If I have seen further than others it is because I was standing on the shoulders of giants."

Leadership sets the wrong example when it does not walk its talk. It sets the wrong example when it feels that some things are ok for the leader to do because they are above the employee's or followers.

It is not often difficult to know a bad example in leadership.

Firstly, they use threats and punishment to motivate followers.

Secondly, they use fear tactics to get results. They tell people that if production doesn't pick up around here, somebody will lose their job; 'heads will roll'.

Thirdly, they practice self servicing power. When a leader uses power in an inappropriate way, it becomes intoxicating and on the other hand it produces the wrong result.

Fourthly, leaders who are bad examples create factions, in-groups and out groups. They seem to enjoy an 'us versus them' atmosphere.

52. POOR DECISION MAKING

> “Don't confuse poor decision-making with destiny. Own your mistakes. It’s ok; we all make them. Learn from them so they can empower you!”— *Steve Maraboli*

Generally, all leaders set out to make good decisions. However, the results which follow have often shown that good leaders can make bad decisions. The challenge starts with the fact that we all place leaders on a pedestal and assume that leaders automatically make good decisions for the followers or damn the followers.

On the contrary, many times leaders make bad decisions and even frequently make worse decisions than their followers. Leaders are not always the best people to make the decision for organisations; for a group of people or for any business.

We are surrounded with the evidences of bad decisions from good Leaders. An example is the decision of Jurgen Schrempp, the CEO of Daimler Benz, who decided - against internal opposition - to acquire Chrysler of America and nine years later had to let go through some kind of agreement because of the apparent likelihood of bankruptcy.

Another example is the decision by politicians or presidents of nations to annul certain elections, simply because it doesn’t favour them or to confer and have town house discussions with only the privileged few on national matters before making decisions that affect the majority of the population.

Decisions to dig heels in even in a changing climate on certain matters, show poor decision making come for various reasons:

a. A lot of decisions from some of such leaders are purely reactive and possibly an answer to an issue that has been raised by others

b. Bad decisions come from self interest when the leader elevates the benefit of the decision for themselves and their cohorts above the population.

c. There are pre-judgments as to what the result would be if they make the decision without looking at the various consequences of the

decisions being made.

d. Attachments: Often times leaders make decisions because of an attachment to the subject of discussion. Sometimes leaders have been known to keep members of their executive board because of a certain kind of attachment - even if the persons are seemingly not performing.

e. Political Reasons; This is diverse and dependent on the political terrain. Some nations elevate and give positions not on the basis of competence but geographical connection of the persons involved.

Political pressure could also include giving jobs to 'the boys' because they are part of the ruling party - even if they do not have the skill or competence.

Often times these decisions are made to the detriment of the nation and with a blatant action of overlooking competent and skilled people who could have done better in the particular area.

Having said this, it must also be admitted that sometimes intelligent and good decisions may be flawed from the onset and may result in a loss or a damaging consequence on the organisation.

A possible approach to preventing poor decision making and leadership failure may be:

a. To engage in real debate. Thus allowing many people to contribute to the discussion.

b. To consider alternatives and allow oneself to be put in a box early on the matter being discussed.

c. To learn from past mistakes.

d. Zero in on what is important without allowing the emotions to take over.

53. INSECURITY

> “Insecurities have the ability to shape and mold our minds to live with everything that’s bad; like crying on the inside, while smiling on the outside…thus creating pain…but, alas, I have the answer; forget about what you thought and enjoy (embrace) what you feel” —*Jeremy Aldana*

What is insecurity? It is the feeling of not being good enough to meet the challenges of a situation or to face the issues of life.

Insecurity gives a sense of helplessness in the face of problems, conflicts or concern. It makes one feel like they do not fit in or are out of sync with those who are their peer groups. It is the fear of being discovered to be inadequate, ill fitted, unsuited to meet the responsibilities at home, school and, as it applies to our subject, leadership.

An insecure leader is even more dangerous because when one feels that he is inadequate to handle a matter or incompetent to handle life’s challenges, woe betide that leader if in his group a person rises who has a degree of confidence and a focus that makes them able.

Poor self esteem based on family experiences is shockingly high within the realms of leadership. It has made many leaders to have the sense of always climbing but never reaching the top. In some cases, where a leader is an achiever, he feels inadequate and his success seems like a failure to him. They are always looking for validation in the wrong places. There is a sense of lacking in support or reinforcement where they live, work, play or those whom they serve.

Insecurity often times is a by-product of early rejection, disapproval of being unaccepted. It creates an inner turmoil which results in a lack of direction or a bewilderment as to where to go. Whenever insecurity is present in a person, they could achieve but they will either be perpetual state of comparing themselves with someone else, or in some cases it may result in victimizing the followership if that is what makes the leader

feel strong on the outside.

Many dictators and leaders who have gone wrong have been known to have backgrounds of rejection and inadequacies that were never dealt with.

One of the worst tendencies which set a leader up for failure is insecurity. As a matter of fact, there is more damage done by it particularly to young and upcoming leaders than anyone else.

It makes such people vulnerable by reason of the position they have attained because it allows them to be consumed by pride.

Dictionary.com defines Insecurity as the lack of confidence or assurance, self doubt, the quality or state of being insecure or instability.

Insecurity is a double headed hydra which makes people take on pride to cover-up or a false humility because of an inability to stand tall and occupy a position.

The other words which convey the same meaning would be changeability, fickleness, fluctuation, inconsistency, wavering, weakness and unpredictability.

We are not only exposed or vulnerable to each of these things when we are young but rather it becomes even more manifest when we are in situations which stretch us, when demands are made upon us that seem to be above our ability to handle or cope with.

The success orientated society of the 21st Century also doesn't seem to help because when a man fails, he is seen as not being seen good enough. In leadership, some leaders do not immediately realise that the actions they exhibit suggest insecurity.

Firstly, when they try to exercise too much control and have to be in charge of everything, or when they refuse to take advice from anyone and seem to be the only wise one among the people they serve. Insecure leaders also like to raise a standard so high and operate by a legalistic approach, making them control freaks. Several other characteristics that may have been mentioned in other parts of this book could reflect insecurity.

This includes micro-managing, refusing to delegate, constantly yelling at staff, creating teams of 'yes men' and not those who challenge the decision of the leader, backstabbing or creating the atmosphere for it, being the controller of knowledge and therefore making everyone come to the leader, delaying decisions and flip flopping afterwards, name

dropping to show how important the leader is and who they know, defending when they should explore and being vulnerable when it could help them or even correct.

Insecure Leaders take things personally. When a criticism comes forward, they do not see it as a criticism of a decision, action or opinion; they see it as a criticism of their person. In some circumstances, an insecure leader is unable to say NO without feeling guilty.

They are experts at trading blame. They prefer to share the blame with other people and then take all the credit. In some circumstances, they blame higher authority for all the tougher decisions that went wrong. Insecure leaders have a difficulty trusting people because they do not trust themselves.

However, they do not use that exact word to describe the state of their own condition. They won't delegate because of the fear of failure and mistakes. And in the end they drop the ball and make more mistakes.

It is very difficult to describe insecure leaders and insecurity in general and not find a little of it rubbing on us because essentially we are all fallen humanity. The ways out would include a desire and an attempt to believe that we all have a purpose and a place and we belong in this world.

This should be followed by the importance of people knowing that you are human and leadership does not exclude you from that.

A good leader who wants to overcome his insecurities would need to read the biographies of others and see the weakness and strength of leaders; what they did when their decisions went wrong, then let opportunity motivate them rather than fear.

Decisions that are based on fear do not always end up being profitable. When an insecure person is confronted with a decision that seems tough, they need to make it known. So they do not make it look like it is a walk through the park and when the consequences come, they bury their head in the sand.

To overcome insecurity the discussion, debate or matter being confronted should be centred on the issues and not people. Small people discuss people, great minds discuss issues. In the process, give others what you wish they would give you. If you wish they give you attention, give the same out. Act and speak with gentle confidence not over-confidence. Over-confidence in itself may be a sign of insecurity.

Leadership must realise that making decisions should be the primary thing and not the pursuit of success for its own sake. As one's confidence grows, he needs to act with optimism, even if the result will not be as positive as expected.

If you must compare yourself, let it be with yourself and not with others. All men have their giftings and abilities, and beyond yourself learn to pray.

And finally, the path to overcoming is trodden upon by taking trusted people into our confidence and letting them know our insecurities.

54. NO SUCCESSION PLAN

"Organizational survival is the ultimate indicator of success."
Hannan and Freeman

No one seems to want to leave their position of leadership. From Presidents who seek a change of constitution in order to perpetuate their term; to founders of organisations who believe it is their right to found it and stay there until their death. There are also suppressive CEOs, Heads of organisations, who consider it a thing of celebration that no one could do the job like they do.

A Succession Plan – What is it?

It is actually planning for the future and preparing the organisation in readiness for somebody else to progress it further from where the leader stops. Actually, success without a Successor is failure.

A Succession Plan is learning to focus on the future of the organisation, knowing full well that you might not be there at a time when that future arrives.

Why is a succession plan necessary?

a. For the sake of continuity. The organisation which dies with the current leader has failed; not because it does not have the potential to expand but because the leader has failed to realise that true leadership is raising the future generation. A good leader should be able to ask himself 'who will replace me someday' and such a thought should excite him to pave way for them to begin to come up.

b. A succession plan also is necessary because it gives room for creativity. Generations change and people have different perspectives. One generation is fading away, another is rising. The generation that was born almost 40 years ago is different to the ones who were born after the 2nd World War.

- The new generation long for a sense of belonging.
- They value authenticity, transparency and humility.
- They desire a change in the world, environmentally and geographically.
- They find meaning in things that are mysterious, metaphoric,

paradoxical and artistic.

This generation is the ‘Facebook’ generation, the ‘MySpace’ generation, the generation who has had an opportunity to rub minds with the computer; the micros and the mobile phone. They prefer the practical and the immediate to the dogmatic and bureaucratic. They bring creativity that is fluid and continuous.

c. A succession plan is also necessary because it helps an organisation, nation, people, places to experience capacity building. Today’s success may be great for now but the capacity of the future would obviously be much better. At the wake of the 80s, new information and discoveries was every ten years. In the 90s, it was every year. In 2000 and beyond, it was every month. Nowadays, there is a fresh and new breakthrough in almost every remit, every day.

A leader who therefore fails to prepare his organisation, nation, and people for succession will find that it won’t be long before they’re caught up with obsolescence.

d.The next reason which makes a Succession Plan a necessity is the creation of the future. However, succession plans often are more saddled with challenges than possibilities. Oftentimes because of the current leadership which tends to resist it. Leaders often never like to let go. However, like our children who must at one time move away from us and sail away into their own destiny, it is important that a leader realises that a succession plan is rather part of his success.

The challenges of succession are complex. There is the organisation which may not like the new person but prefers the stability, the old brings; or the new person who may not like the new organisation because he observes there are things that require change.

Succession is sometimes difficult because the family of the new Leader is having challenges adjusting to the current place; corporate culture is not friendly but rather adversarial. The new leader may fail because he is unable to win a following since his style and interpersonal skills have not been developed; which also means that his values and belief system do not match with the organisation. Sometimes there is a failure of succession because the new leader truly is dynamic and the ability to make the organisation succeed but the old guard along with the

old leader are sabotaging his efforts.

And yet all these may not be as difficult as the old leader who fails to totally disappear over the horizon but keeps making excuses and has reasons for perpetually being around the organisation and making it look as if someone is trying to abort his baby.

The only thing which makes succession very difficult, is the departing leader. Why? Well, they may have a fear of retirement, a resistance to change, there is also a possibility of him not making adequate financial preparation for the future. Several people have moved on and allowed a successor only to find that they did not have enough to keep them busy and engaged in a profitable way.

e. A succession plan is not a walk through the park. There may also be challenges particularly if the leader who is departing seems to draw his sense of worth and confidence from the position and title. This possibly accounts for the reason why many Third World Presidents and Heads of States have difficulty in transition into regular civilian life and handing over to someone else.

On the contrary, they perpetuate their position and make it look as if no one is adequate in a nation of teeming millions; no one is able to replace them; which in itself is a sure sign of failure.

When leadership fails to prepare and produce a Succession Plan, it could not be described as a success. Within that context the leader has failed.

Correcting this situation may be by developing a mentoring system from day one. No one ever arrives fully ready to take on a major responsibility. The onus rest on a true leader to see potential in people, develop the ability to tolerate mistakes and abrasiveness and challenge such potential people to become the best that they can be. In raising future leaders, of course, the leader is risking his own reputation because he may have made the mistake of choosing the wrong protégé.

However, it is better to impart Leadership skills in other people than to do nothing at all and feel that in this way the organisation will always need him.

Leadership is truly a major investment. Those who are at the higher echelon in any organisation invest emotionally, psychologically, musically and otherwise. Sometimes the dividends may have not been fully grown,

when it may be time to depart.

However, a leader may look at it in a different way and realise that he has made a contribution in his lifetime and truly prepares the coming generation to succeed him, whether he is remembered or not.

55. DERAILMENT

In August 2009 a tidal wave hit the banking industry of the country of Nigeria which led to the removal of five CEOs of banks. This action carried, out by the Apex Bank (the Central Bank of Nigeria) was as the consequence of the shocking result of the true health of Nigerian Banks. (Apex Bank when deployed resident examiners on a special examination of the nations' banks). One major issue for international investors was whether the extent of these banks that were exposed extended to the nineteen others.

The Apex Bank discovered among many other things a compromise of due process and the deliberate flaunting of corporate laws. CEOs of these banks were reported to have amassed untold wealth within a short time and in some cases owning properties which they turned around and rented back to the banks. It may not be unique to them; frequently an exceptional executive may encounter a corporate trap door, fall through and end up derailing because of the pressure which comes with the opportunity.

Many executives have stepped in to critical situations where their experience, training and being savvy has not been able to protect them and in the end they fail. In some circumstances, boards have taken over; that way it brings the exceptional executive job to an unceremonial end.

The 21st century seems to have brought along with the multiple success and opportunities a corporate trap door. Today we observe an intensifying global challenge, instability in the capital market and increasing demand for personal and corporate transparency.

All these make the need for the executive to be savvy and experienced or else fall victim to the treacherous physical, mental and political gauntlet that comes along with it.

In the 21st century, it is becoming observable that CEOs are no longer remaining in their offices for a longer period because of the challenge of derailment.

Derailment comes in several ways–

a. Business Failure

One of the most obvious reasons for derailment is when business fails through the lack of liquidity, inability to access capital and credit,

plunging market capitalisation or a failed financial performance.

A CEO who cannot get his organization to turn this around has failed the test of executive's survivability.

b. Another major reason for derailment is with the advent of the internet and sources of information like 'Wiki Leaks', personal or ethical compromise have been dusted up and put in public eye. Such unsettling information has made boards across the world make quick decisions and change their CEOs. Where the board is made up of `Yes Men', regulators have been known to step in.

c. A more major reason for derailment may be the inability of the person who has been elevated to the position of CEO. Bad decisions, wrong actions, incubate and end up birthing situations that bring discredit and eventual decline to the organization. The failure of such executive becomes undeniable and irreversible

What are the signs of derailment? Why do leaders fail through derailment?

There are a few telltale signs which once they manifest; they are a red flag and may mean such a leader is setting himself up for failure.

a. Maladjustment

A derailing leader loses focus under pressure, is unable to develop a sense of self-awareness and then becomes sceptical, suspicious and obsessive as to what can go wrong in his organisation. This leads such a person to look for signs of betrayal among staff and misses the whole purpose of leadership which amongst many things is to develop others.

b. Over ambition

An over ambitious executive is in the path of derailment because over ambition makes other people feel invisible, overwhelmed others and intimidated. It also creates competitive rivalry.

An over ambitious leader disengages from others, problems and the organisation; he focuses more on what he can become, achieve or do and in the end he manipulates the system because he feels that the end justifies the means.

c. Lack of interpersonal sensitivity

Some of the things we deal with here have been dealt with in other parts of this book. However when a leader fails to develop interpersonal competence; he becomes reluctant to address personnel and performance problems. Rather, he is argumentative, abrupt, insensitive to the people around him, cannot be pleased, is too tough and is critical of other people. He fails to provide timely and sufficient feedback to those who work with him. A detached leader has derailed and has failed.

d. Over inquisitiveness

The strength of leadership is to be visionary, creative and anticipatory; to be curious and carry the staff along in balancing innovation with practicality but when the leader begins to lack initiative and the ability to be inquisitive and work on what could give ground breaking success in the future; such leader reverts to old standards, pragmatic solutions, narrow vision and sometimes totally withdraws and settles for average results.

e. Unteachable

Being a leader should not make one unteachable. This weakness in leadership is what becomes a reason for derailment.

When a leader fails to stay up to date with the area of his responsibility, whether in technical matters or facts about the job; an unteachable mind will make a leader neglect to invest in new skills and processes for improvement. He becomes forgetful, loses sight of the facts, he is rather aggressive to adopt the old ways of doing things and behaves as if he knows all things. While true leadership makes one open to new experiences, training and adaptability. When these red flags manifest, a leader may have derailed from the original purpose of the organisation.

Derailment is a by product of taking wrong steps in critical times or situations. Any organisation can go through a tough time, but the tough time should not end up being a trap door which ends up holding the leader and those who work with him in a perpetual merry go round without moving forward.

The antidote to derailment will be to create an inner circle; a group of people whom the leader or executive trusts, is open to and can receive

advice and coaching from. It could be mentors from previous organizations or specialist consultants who can help him.

This inner circle which a leader has created and enlisted will help to protect his dreams and vision by sharing wisdom and providing insight. An inner circle is able to give warnings because they observe the early signs. An inner circle is emotionally detached from the situation and can therefore have valid and valuable judgement.

The inner circle helps such a leader to shape his thoughts and processes; they put his decisions to test and help him to observe the areas where he has failed to see.

Derailment can also be prevented by the leader as he becomes able to admit that he has Achilles heel – `to thyself be true'. An increased awareness of our weaknesses helps us to adjust better, to employ people and make them our strength in the area of our weakness.

By the time one is of kindergarten age, certain patterns and manner of life have been shaped. They only increase no matter what training we take. Behavioural patterns do not go away easily; this hard wired persona of us may be easily observed by others who have chosen to look carefully. Such people are then able to help the leader know where the area of his strength is.

A socio-metric test may not exactly be the best way to observe and then overcome because sometimes the leader is involved in the test he can influence the result.

When leaders have been confronted with the challenge, two negative actions have sometimes been adopted, a flight or a fight. Both are counterproductive because running away from issues does not resolve anything, neither is choosing to fight it out because when it gets bloody there may be more damaging revelations at the end.

A flight from a situation will give the impression that the leader is insecure, mistrustful, withdrawn and risk averse. Fighting may suggest that he intimidates and manipulates.

f. It is important for the leader to develop his ability to read the situation.

Derailment can be avoided if the leader can become wise enough to

read the context. Having read the context he can now develop a method for handling issues.

A leader who takes on an organization should get to know the context, protocol and boundaries; he should find the keys that unlock the whole communication, collaboration and management system of a place instead of coming with an attitude that suggests that he has come with a Gestapo approach to change things by force.

Reading the situation is a skill that can be learnt; it is amazing to know that making friends of everyone from the man at the gate to the reception clerk could give one a clear perception of what is going on but along with this; the intuitive skills of the leader will protect him from derailment in such a situation.

g. Lastly, maybe a master protection from derailment will be a teachable spirit or a learning agenda.

This comes with the skills of listening, the acceptance of failure when it becomes apparent; the leader must realize that today's world does not seem to be fair; everything we do is in the full view of everybody, from employees to the stakeholders, bloggers to those who go on the internet and the media.

In a nutshell, the chances of derailment are very obvious but at the same time the chances of success are even bigger because the leader now has more information at his fingertips than previous executives have done.

Conclusion

In the past 25 years, organizational culture, systems and operations which were thought to be fail safe have been seen to collapse.

Major corporations have suffered from systems implosion. At the same time, nations like Iraq and Afghanistan have been invaded to bring about change, democracy and new leadership. Others have experienced a revolution and an implosion, particularly the Arab Spring. The wind which blew across the Middle East brought a change to Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen and Libya, is still blowing.

Where the wind has not blown, particularly in developing nations of the third world, there is an oxymoron, a contradiction. Many of these nations have natural, human and mineral resources and yet they are underdeveloped.

These various settings described seem to have one common challenge - Failed Leadership.

Why Do Leaders Fail?

There are several reasons given in this book. However, it includes the fact that leaders fail when their vision is unclear and they do not walk the talk, when they refuse to learn or develop those who walk with them.

The importance of this subject cannot be overemphasized because if we fix the leaders we will fix the world.

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