

## **HORRIBLE LEADERS**

**JAMES BAIRD**

Southwest University, Geronimo, El Paso, Texas, United States of America

### **ABSTRACT**

Much has been said about what constitutes an excellent leader. But, what does a horrible leader look like? And how do aspiring leaders avoid becoming one? Unfortunately, this is a time in which, horrible leaders thrive; they perform unethical and despicable acts everyday, in business. This narrative discusses on what horrible leaders do, how they act, and how their minds work.

**KEYWORDS:** Bad Leadership, Leadership, Ineffective Leadership, Poor Management Styles

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **Looking for Leaders**

It is important to know and understand that, merely because someone holds a position of leadership; it does not mean they should. In other words, not all leaders are created equal. The affliction from which many organizations suffer is, one of the recognition. They cannot seem to recognize good leaders, from bad ones. (Myatt, 2016)

#### **What Questions Should We Be Asking Ourselves?**

Bad leaders are everywhere; it sometimes seems like, a plague has struck within the environment of the business world. What does a horrible leader look like? What are the attributes of these bad leaders? What exactly do horrible leaders do? As a leader, do you possess some of these qualities? How do you avoid becoming a horrible leader? What do you need to do, to transcend the pitfalls of the next level and avoid copying these poor behaviors of horrible leaders?

#### **Leadership Assessments**

The good news is, there is a better way to assess leadership ability. Rather than traditional assessment techniques, to truly determine one's leadership prowess, simply give them some responsibility and observe what they do with it. If an enterprise has trouble identifying leaders, or has a shortage of leaders, it is not a testing problem; it is a leadership problem. Traditional assessments, historically do not tell the whole story of any individual's leadership ability. (Myatt, 2016)

#### **Horrible Leaders Fail to Lead Themselves**

A leader, who lacks character or integrity, will not endure the test of time. It does not matter how intelligent, how affable, how persuasive or how savvy, one is. If someone is prone to rationalizing unethical behavior, based upon current or future needs, he or she will eventually fall prey to their own undoing. Optics over ethics, is not a formula for success in the long term. Leaders must continually think long-term, not short-term. Short-term profits are just that, and will not bring success in future years.

### **Horrible Leaders Practice a One-Size-Fits-All Leadership Style**

Horrible leaders are neither fluid nor flexible, in their approach. They do not understand the power of and necessity for a contextual relationship. “My way or the highway” leadership styles will not fare well, in today’s world. That type of behavior will result in a fractured culture and ultimately a non-productive organization. Millennials especially, do not respond well to this type of leadership style. Horrible leaders think proprietary – not open-source; control – not surrender; dictate – not collaborate. This way of thinking will lead to a lack of respect and a loss of trust, among employees as well as colleagues. (Riggio, 2016)

### **Horrible Leaders Feel “It’s all About Them”**

Poor leaders do not understand the concept of service above self. They will not engender trust, confidence, and loyalty, of those whom they lead. Any leader is only as good as his or her team’s desire and willingness, to be led by him or her. An over-abundance of ego, pride, and arrogance are not positive leadership traits in any way, shape, or form. Bad leaders take the credit and give the blame – not the other way around. When leaders receive a vote of non-confidence, from their employees, vital objectives and goals are not accomplished.

### **Leaders Who Cannot See It Will Probably Not Find It**

Bad leaders live without vision and will eventually fail. Leaders who lack vision cannot inspire teams; cannot motivate performance; cannot empower employees; cannot engage employees; and cannot create sustainable value. Poor vision, tunnel vision, uncertain vision, or wholly non-existent vision, are all clear signs of a horrible leader. The leader’s job is to align the entire organization, around a clear and achievable vision. This cannot occur, when the blind attempt to lead the blind. This inevitably, leads to a company-wide fog which obscures everyone’s view and causes general malaise, among the very people who need to drive the company in achieving its objectives.

### **How to Spot a Horrible Leader**

Poor leaders employ threats and punishment routinely. They act like police officers and believe everyone should fear them. They use fear tactics, such as pitting departments or shifts, against each other. These managers are self-serving and use their power solely, for their own advancement and personal gain. Bosses who create factions, or encourage “in-groups versus out-groups” actions will not achieve the mission of the organization. Manager’s who have unclear expectations, create confusion and chaos everywhere they go. When the leader communicates poorly, leaving meaning up to interpretation, goals become blurred, in the employees’ lens of understanding. The use of intimidation and bullying destroys morale, and brings a tidal wave of doubt and suspicion. It also can turn into a legal nightmare, which constitutes bad public relations and can be very costly. (Riggio, 2016).

### **Bad Leaders Fail to Communicate**

When leaders are constantly mystified by those who do not seem to get it, there exists, both a leadership and communication problem. These leaders do not have the ability to communicate effectively, across various mediums, constituencies, or environments. Bad leaders do not have the acumen, to be active or fluid listeners, nor do they have the capacity of awareness of, when to dial it up, down, or off. Horrible leaders are “inbox slaves,” who are very comfortable leading from behind mobile devices. They tend to enjoy and elect, to communicate in the very medium (email or text) which is particularly ineffective, especially when there are needs to be immediate and personal interaction.

Communication, which could take three minutes in person, over the phone, or via webinar, can ultimately end up taking three hours or even three days. Additionally, the written word is always subject to the reader's own unique interpretation and tone cannot be imparted, in an email or a text. Leaders must make sure that, everyone understands what they need to do everyday, in order to get the organizational goals completed. Leadership is a relationship, and at the root of any great relationship is great communication.

### **The Rotten Listener**

Many times, the Rotten Listener is one with quite a large ego, typically does not listen, and feels as if he or she already has all the answers. This, in turn, makes it difficult for employees to buy into projects and goals, set by the company. They feel that, this superior has not considered processes, policies, metrics, or even just the real world issues, which could have seriously negative impacts later.

### **Know-It-Alls**

The best leaders are aware of how much they do not know. They do not need to be the smartest person in the room, and they have an unyielding desire to learn from others. A true leader knows and understands that, if he or she is not growing, they cannot lead a growing enterprise. Horrible leaders do not let others contribute, because they believe that, they already have all the answers. This does not work; employees will shut down and will not share their ideas or suggestions, for improvements. This will also have a negative effect on morale and engagement; and it can lead to disastrous effects on the organization. (Riggio, 2016)

### **Cynicism**

Being cynical is oxymoronic, for a leader. It is an admission that, they cannot do their job. They will routinely make statements like; "No, that's not going to work" or "I do not know why we are doing this." Cynical leaders, do not realize the impact that, this has on engagement and empowerment of the subordinate. It can quickly kill morale. Employees do not get charged up, to do a team cliff dive. If something is unclear, the leader has the responsibility, for making it clear. It is the leader's obligation, to create or obtain clarification.

### **The Foul-Mouthed Leader**

Many leaders do not realize how demoralizing profanity, and this type of behavior can be. If foul language, in an angry tone comes out of any leader's mouth, it can very easily create a situation, wherein no one wants to function in a positive and productive way. Whether it is out of anger, disgust, or simply habit, it should not be brought to the office. This is also a very large liability, for the organization as a whole, as it can be deemed by some as creating a hostile working environment.

### **The Nothing Boss**

In most business industries, change is always in the air. There are new technology developments, new ideas being born, new challenges emerging, and new competitors appearing. Leaders who land in this area quickly find that, their competition has outlined them and taken advantage of their complacency. It cannot be assumed that, employees will tell their leadership, when there is a problem. Poor managers are comfortable, assuming everything is alright when it is not. This is a recipe for subordinates, to become disenchanting and disengaged. When employees find that, they are working for a complacent boss, they will question the future. This is a sure way to lose good workers.

### **The Best Friend Boss**

Instead of being a supervisor, which is difficult for them, managers who fall into this category, opt to make friends. Leaders can never be “buddies”, with their employees. Friendships will neutralize the leader’s authority and influence. It can also veil the boss’s objectivity, and hinder their ability to correct bad behavior, and hold workers accountable. Good leaders are friendly, but do not cross that line, which muddies the relationship between boss and friend.

### **Unethical Leaders**

The Unethical Leader, is perhaps the most appalling to employees, and is a powerful Demotivator. When a leader does not face true north, or cheats, or lies, or manifest behaviors, which show a lack of principle, they will lose the respect of the staff they supervise. Furthermore, when a leader exhibits unethical behavior, it gives employees permission to do the same. These types of behaviors, will spread throughout the organization and cause not only morale problems, but legal problems too (Hein, 2017).

### **The Disorganized Leader**

These types of leaders cause chaos and confusion, throughout the company. Organizations are teeming with workers, who lack direction because, the supervisor is disorganized. They cannot deliver and communicate strategies, which are vital to successful completion of departmental goals and objectives. This type of leader entertains random thoughts, i.e., un-focused, and is clueless as to how to accomplish the Mission and Vision of the company. In all, practicality nothing gets done and this leaves employees hapless and unmotivated, to even support the very cause they should be championing (Hein, 2017).

## **CONCLUSIONS**

### **Leadership is a Relationship**

Leaders must realize that, leading is a social art. There must exist, a connection with employees other than just a paycheck. People want and need to be respected and appreciated in the workplace; it is a basic human need. The workforce must be able to get up in the morning and want to come to work. Only then, can they be productive, happy, motivated, engaged, and empowered to do their job. This will lead to greater productivity and enhanced business processes, procedures, and metrics.

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**AUTHOR DETAILS**

Dr. James Baird earned a Bachelor's in Business Management in 1999 cum laude and his Master of Business Administration, with a specialization in Healthcare Management in 2001, both from the University of Phoenix, with honors. In 2006, he completed his Ph.D., in Leadership and Organizational Management at Capella University, with distinction. He is a Certified Allied Health Instructor and a Fellow of the American College of Healthcare Executives. With more than twenty years of clinical, administrative, management, and leadership experience, in the health care field, as well as seventeen years of leadership & teaching experience at the College level, Dr. Baird is considered by many, a leadership expert.

