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3 signs your leadership is failing



The Simpson's Mr Burns exhibits signs of a failing leader.

by **Michelle Gibbings**

Are you frustrated that your team isn't changing fast enough? Do you feel no one else is performing as well as you? Are you mystified that the numbers don't reflect your efforts when everyone around you says you're doing a great job?

If you're experiencing any of these it's a sign your leadership is faltering.

It's all too easy for leaders to have an overly confident opinion of their effectiveness. Research shows a correlation between a person's confidence and their seniority. That is, the more senior a person becomes the more confident they are of their abilities and opinion.

However, the Centre for Workplace Leadership's ground-breaking 2016 [Study of Australian Leadership](#) highlighted the growing gap between the leadership capability that exists and the capability that's needed.

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Michelle Gibbings, founder of Change Meridian. Supplied

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The Deloitte 2014 [Human Capital Trends](#) study, which surveyed more than 2500 companies in 90 countries around the world, found one of the biggest challenges was the overwhelmed employee, whose feelings are exacerbated by ineffective leadership.

When a leader's leadership fails it not only stymies their career, it directly impacts organisational performance.

Stop being willing to change

It's easy to get stuck in our ways and to see the traits that landed us the role as the capability that will carry us forward. However, in a world that is constantly changing success requires leaders to embrace the notion that transformation requires personal change not just change for those around them.

Harvard academics Robert Kegan and Lisa Lahey, who have studied why many crucial organisational change efforts fail, found one of the core problems is the gap between what is required and a leader's own level of development: "It may be nearly impossible for us to bring about any important change in a system or organisation without changing ourselves (at least somewhat)," they wrote in *How the Way We Talk Can Change the Way We Work*.

The smartest person in the room

The downfall of many great companies can be traced to the hubris and arrogance of its leaders. Having a fixed mindset, the leaders close themselves off from feedback and feel they have nothing more to learn; they shut down dissenting opinion, convinced of their infallibility.

By contrast, sustainable leaders know they don't have all the answers. They are constantly seeking to push the boundaries, to question and inquire. They are not afraid to be humble and ask for advice.

As a wise person once said: "If you think you're the smartest person in the room – you need to find another room."

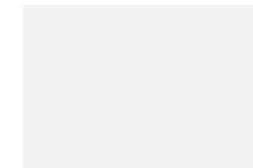
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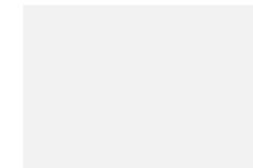
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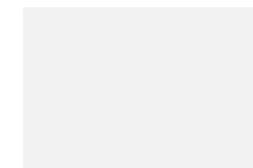
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doesn't create long-term, sustainable business outcomes. This is because it's is easy to be over-confident about ideas and decisions, when there is no one around to challenge them.

Leaders need people who question how they think and disrupt their default patterns.

Deliberately seeking out differences of opinion is critical, because it is this diversity of thought that supports more effective decision making.

[Michelle Gibbings](#) is the founder of change leadership and career consultancy Change Meridian and author of Step Up: How to Build Your Influence at Work.

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