

Management Disaster Ahead!

Career Stalling Mistakes Smart Managers Make

By David Lee

“Jurgen”, a very bright engineer, descended upon a manufacturing company after his parent company acquired them. While he had great intentions and high aspirations for dramatically increasing their operational efficiency, he was met with fierce resistance. I was asked to come in and find out why.

Meeting with Jurgen, I found him to be very bright, personable, and an interesting conversationalist. I liked him. However, his team didn’t.

They despised him.

As I interviewed both his direct reports and others who worked with him, I was regaled with stories of arrogance, disrespect, and intimidation. While he had big hopes of inspiring greater productivity and turning the plant around, his behavior laid the foundation for his failure.

Jurgen was about to self-destruct because - like many other brilliant (and some not so brilliant) managers - he was blind to the career stalling and workforce alienating behaviors he was inflicting on others.

Warning! Career Destruction Straight Ahead

In his new book, *What Got You Here Won’t Get You There: How Successful People Become Even More Successful!*, executive coach Marshal Goldsmith highlights the 20 behaviors that frequently cause the careers of senior executives and high level managers to swerve into head-on traffic.

When I read his book – which is perhaps the best management book I’ve ever read – I found myself reacting to most of the items in his list with: “Yep, I’ve seen that destroy employee morale and commitment time and again,” “Oh yeah... this is definitely one of the classic things that employees despise...”

These 20 behavioral blunders don’t just put a screeching halt on a once meteoric rise to the top, they’re also a Whose Who among:

“Sure Fire Ways to Destroy Employee Motivation, Morale, and Engagement”

Speaking of disengagement, remember Gallup’s research which revealed that 55% of employees are what Gallup labeled ROAD Warriors – Retired on Active Duty? Gallup’s researchers found that the majority of employees are basically “doing time”. Only 26% of those surveyed reported being “highly engaged” – i.e. caring about helping their employer succeed.

Thus, avoiding the behaviors that lead to disengagement should be on every company’s management team’s To Do list.

While Goldsmith identifies 20, I want to focus on the five I see as most damaging when it comes to employee engagement.

Five Managerial Behaviors That Damage Careers and Destroy Employee Motivation

1. **Needing to Win All the Time** – The same drive that leads to high achievement can also destroy relationships and one’s effectiveness. Think of people you know who have to win every argument, have to establish their superiority in every discussion, and always have to be right. Get’s old, doesn’t it? One of the challenges high achievers faces is knowing when they’re winning at the wrong things – i.e. their “win” is really a loss. What to do about this? When you’re poised to pounce and once

again land on top, ask: “Is it worth it?”

2. **Adding Too Much “Value”.** – When you’re really smart and knowledgeable, it’s hard not to “tweak” your employees’ suggestions so they’re even better. However, the overall effect of such “added value” is often a net negative, according to Goldsmith. While your input might increase the value of a direct report’s idea by 5%, the resulting 50% loss of commitment to executing the idea – because now the idea is yours, not theirs -- is not worth that extra value. Obviously sometimes your added value is important. Learn to discern when the net value is positive, and when it’s not.
3. **“Let Me Explain Why That Won’t Work”** – If you’ve ever had a boss who had this response as a default position, you know what a motivation destroyer this behavior is. Such wet blanket responses lead all but the most persistent – or masochistic – people to give up even bothering to offer their opinions. While the wet blanket person might think they are demonstrating intellectual superiority by shooting down other’s perceptions, others don’t see it that way. In the words of Goldsmith, “They’re annoying. And over time, we treat them as if they’re carrying the avian flu. We avoid them. We stop working with them. We refuse to help them.”
4. **Not Listening** – This is perhaps the most common complaint I hear from employees about their boss. While not as overtly disrespectful as sarcasm, yelling, or other abusive behavior, it conveys both personal and professional disrespect. Not listening also paves the way for never hearing about major employee relations problems until they blow up. Not listening is also a great way to create a listless, disinterested, “Yeah, whatever...” workforce.

5. **Failing to Express Gratitude** – Besides being just plain bad manners, not saying “Thank you” or expressing appreciation is a huge employee motivation destroyer. It’s also rampant in the work world. Think of how many times you’ve gone the extra mile for a boss, perhaps subordinating your personal life to get a project done, and never receiving a simple “Thank you.” Conversely, think of bosses you’ve had who express appreciation, and how willing you are to go above and beyond for them. Decades of research show that feeling appreciated is one of the greatest sources of employee motivation.

An Unhappy Ending... and a Fresh New Start

Back to Jurgen. Unfortunately, he was never willing to look in the mirror and acknowledge he doing things that were alienating his team—and leading to many of the problems that frustrated him. It was all their fault; not his.

After a few years of frustration, he was gone.

Don’t be like Jurgen.

Instead:

1. **Get What Got You Here Won’t Get You There: How Successful People Become Even More Successful!** and find out all 20 behaviors.
2. Ask yourself which ones you might be doing.
3. Get feedback – preferably of the 360° kind. I can guarantee, others see you differently than you do.
4. Seek out a coach.

If you do, you’ll be doing your career, your employer, and your team a favor.

About the Author: David Lee is the founder and principal of [HumanNature@Work](http://HumanNature@Work.com). He is an internationally recognized authority on organizational and managerial practices that optimize employee performance, morale, and engagement. Mr. Lee is the author of *Managing Employee Stress and Safety*, as well as several dozen articles on organizational and individual performance that have been published in a number of trade journals in North America, Europe, Australia, and Asia.

Mr. Lee provides consulting, training, and executive coaching services that help organizations and their managers achieve the following results:

- Improve employee morale and productivity.
- Develop a Magnetic Employer Brand™ that leads to “employer of choice” status, cuts down on recruiting costs and turnover, and leads to a better talent pool to draw upon.
- Reduce the time, energy, and financial cost of employee relations problems by identifying organizational and managerial practices that prevent such problems from occurring, and helping managers develop the facilitation skills to quickly and effectively resolve such issues.
- Help employees respond effectively to change, so their energy is spent contributing to – rather than fighting – change initiatives.
- Create an environment and provide skills that enable sales and customer service professionals to maximize customer loyalty.

Comments about David Lee’s Work:

"Thank you for doing such an outstanding job keynoting our conference. As you could tell by the response, participants loved both the content and the delivery of your presentation."

Dr. Ian Gawler, Director, The Gawler Foundation, Victoria, Australia

"I've now worked with over 150 presenters since you last were a part of MEBSR's Spring Conference, and still you stand out as the best person we've ever had come and present on how we best work with one another, increase productivity and thrive."

Sanna McKim, Executive Director, Maine Businesses for Social Responsibility, Maine

"Having seen a lot of speakers, I can't tell you just how impressed I was by David. I even waited in line to talk with him... I learned a great deal and laughed my butt off in the process... When we have someone who is so genuine and so well prepared, we owe it to each other to spread the word.... I take it very seriously when I recommend someone else's work and... he's great!"

Naomi Judd

"I was inspired by David's presentation. As onboarding new ladies and gentlemen at the Ritz-Carlton, Hotel Company LLC is one of the cornerstones of our success, I cannot agree more with his statement that, 'Everything you do in onboarding matters'."

Diana Oreck, Vice President Global Learning & Leadership Center, Ritz Carlton, Maryland

"It was a sheer delight to sit back and listen, learn and laugh as David weaved his extensive knowledge of the material with his abundant practical wisdom generously sprinkled with personal reflections, stories and his own wholesome humor. David brings a rare blend of practical knowledge and genuine humanity to his presentations. One cannot help but leave his sessions smarter, and a better human being, as he has a way of touching one's heart as well as one's head."

Bill Gaertner, MD, Wisconsin

"David, I wanted to thank you for being part our show in Las Vegas. The feedback I have received about your sessions was fantastic!!!!!! Three cheers to you."

Julie McNeney, COO, International Council on Active Aging, Vancouver, BC

"Your presentation on resiliency is extraordinary. I left with a specific action plan for improving the quality of my daily life. Your kindness, your knowledge, and your energy combined for a helpful and inspirational workshop."

Brenda Foster, Director of Communications, Healthwise, Idaho

"Without you realizing, David woos you into learning by appealing to what you naturally know to be true by your own experience. He's incredibly down to earth and balances stories, humor, statistics and research to engage his audience in a time defying way. His programs will benefit anyone looking to gain awareness, passion and spirit in the workplace (and beyond). I was so riveted and inspired that when David said he was wrapping up his program, I was dumbfounded by how much time had passed. I was convinced my watch was mistakenly an hour ahead. Thank you, David, for following your passion & curiosity from which we greatly benefit."

Krista Irmischer, Human Resources Manager, Jøtul North America, Maine

"Whenever I attend a seminar, if I leave with 2 or 3 solid items to implement back at our office, I feel the day has been worthwhile. I left David Lee's half-day course with more than 20 solid, commonsense, no-cost items that I am eager to implement. And the best part is that it is clear that implementing them will have a measurable impact for our firm! This half-day course was an excellent use of time."

Eric S. Wood, President, EnviroSense, Inc., New Hampshire

"I can honestly say that your sessions were highlights for me at the conference. Since then I have perused your website and read many of the articles posted on there. Again, thank you and kudos to you for the great presentation!"

Rob Huppée, Amica Mature Lifestyles Inc., Vancouver, British Columbia

"What makes David unique is his ability to take analytical information, creatively apply it to real life workplace situations, and then deliver it in a really fun way."

Fran Liataud, DialogueWorks, Maine