

TITLE: What Every Manager Needs to Know – How to Avoid the 14 Fatal Errors of Leadership

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A few years ago, business trainer W. Steven Brown published a book about serious errors managers make that impact their ability to manage and lead their teams (13 Fatal Errors Managers Make and How You Can Avoid Them, Berkley Books, New York, 1985). Over the years, times change, the way we do business evolves, but the fundamentals of those fatal errors remain the same – and even a few more common fatal errors have been added to the list.

What does this mean for your floor managers, shift managers, lead techs, head of surgery, Chief Medical Officer? What does it mean for all those positions placing people in charge of critical services that directly impact patient care, client service, team performance, and business success? It means that they are at risk of failure, especially if they have not been properly prepared to tackle the role of supervisor or manager. Take the time to develop effective, proficient supervisors through education about the Fatal Errors.

Fatal Error #1 Refuse To Accept Personal Accountability

This error is all about blaming - blame other people, blame the employee, blame the clients... blame anything and anybody while never accepting responsibility for the role they played in the situation.

When a manager blames others, they actually lose credibility with the team. The team begins to lose trust in the manager to do be a leader of the team, and the ripple effect soon takes over and everyone uses the same blame-game too.

A good manager admits his/her own mistakes, makes the effort to rectify the situation, learns from it, and takes steps to prevent a recurrence.

Fatal Error #2 Fail To Develop People

In some cases, it can be a failure to organize training session, in other cases; it can be a failure to take advantage of a "learning situation". In its worst case, it is the manager deliberately making people dependent on him/her by preventing employees from becoming independent thinkers.

By failing to develop others, it gives the manager more work to do – but it is not productive work. Team members do not develop skills that would aid in the advancement and growth of the business; and, as the saying goes, the test for a manager is not what the manager can do, but what others can do without the manager.

Fatal Error #3 Try To Control Results Instead Of Influencing Thinking

A failure to provide the value of an activity, the failure to provide tools and training that can enhance performance. Instead, the manager just 'barks' about activities.

To influence how a team member thinks about their job responsibilities requires information from the manager about the level of their performance and the effects their performance has on patient care and client service. A manager who presents facts, works with others to involve them in a process, gains support, and builds relationships encourages thinking by everyone on the team.

Fatal Error #4 Join The Wrong Crowd

Us versus Them, The Front versus The Back, Management versus Team, and other small cliques. By using certain labels or pronouns, the manager is derisively referring to others on the team. In some cases, the manager may be setting up battling factions.

A manager should not align themselves with any group. The role of manager requires maintaining ethical standards, building loyalty over common goals, and making every effort to move the team toward productive outcomes.

Fatal Error #5 Manage Everyone The Same Way

Micromanaging or not managing at all. This error results in the managing being viewed as lacking credibility, knowledge, or leadership capability. Managers who never changing their leadership style can appear to be avoiders on one hand, or bullies on the other hand.

Managers need to educate themselves on the appropriate uses for different leadership and communication styles. Knowing when to direct, coach, support, or delegate is important when one is a manager of a diverse group of people.

Fatal Error #6 Forget The Importance Of Profit

Managers who forget about the finances of the business and do not link their decisions to business finances – such as permitting overtime hours every payroll, letting inefficiencies continue to grow, authorizing expenses without analyzing the request, or not following the budget – risk failure.

You need to work ON the business rather than simply working IN the business. Managers must sit at the table with practice owners and take part in monitoring expenses, planning budgets, and understanding the relationship of expenses and income.

Fatal Error #7 Concentrate On Problems Rather Than Objectives

90% of the time, managers find themselves dealing with problems, many which fall under the category of not important and not urgent. In other words, always putting out fires. This extra activity kills creativity and efficiency because the manager's time is focused on problems.

Instead of always focusing on what is broken, look at what is working well. Appreciative Inquiry is a management tool for looking at what works and how it can be applied to other procedures and processes.

Fatal Error #8 Be A Buddy, Not A Boss

A buddy relationship appears as being too social with other team members, and making decisions that benefit an individual but not the entire organization. The dynamics of the work relationship change and make it more difficult for a manager to conduct performance reviews, discipline, or even mediate workplace conflict.

This flaw is especially important when someone is promoted from within the ranks to a management position.

Fatal Error #9 Fail To Set Standards

Lack of compliance, lack of consistency, lack of authority – all of these descriptions affect the manager's ability to do their job. The manager must establish and enforce compliance to policies and procedures, holding people accountable when standards are not followed.

Fatal Error #10 Fail To Train Your People

It is difficult to hold people accountable if they are not trained how to perform their jobs. Failure to train the team inhibits advancement of the practice, prevents initiation of new programs, and permits the continuation of low standards of care.

Empower the team to perform at their best level by giving them the tools and the knowledge to perform their jobs. Establish a budget for training (1/2 -3% of payroll) for training and continuing education needs.

Fatal Error #11 Condone Incompetence

Trying to be a buddy, trying to avoid making difficult decisions, not willing to hold others accountable all give the impression that the manager will condone incompetence. It creates the perception that the manager is unable or unwilling to lead.

Managers need to use effective confrontation. Point out what behavior is being observed, how it makes others feel and how it affects the performance of the team, get the individual's input and agreement on what will be done, and follow up using a performance improvement plan.

Fatal Error #12 Recognize Only The Top Performers

Recognizing only top performers creates a barrier for effectively improving the performance of others when they perceive that they will never achieve top performer status and thus will never be recognized for goals they achieve.

Managers can recognize every team member by utilizing the leadership styles of directing, coaching, supporting, and delegating; acknowledging the 'wins' associated along the way as a person progresses through these different phases of developing their competencies.

Fatal Error #13 Try To Manipulate People

Coercion, attacking self-esteem of others, creating fear within the team, pitting individuals against each other, intimidation, and even threats. Any time a manager resorts to manipulative tactics to motivate people it will eventually cause failures.

Encourage the right behaviors for achieving goals, build trust, and learn how to motivate people the ethical way.

Fatal Error #14 Forgetting the Power of Communication

Lack of information flowing from all areas of the business, lack of emotional intelligence in communications. This error results in an inability to motivate the team to action, breakdown of trust in the team, inability to develop influence, and breakdown in efficiency and productivity of the team.

Skillful interpersonal communications means that the manager not only speaks, but also listens with full attention.

Management is a skill that must be developed in order to provide for successful business results. The "fatal errors" will deconstruct the work environment to a point where the team cannot function at their highest potential and the Circle of Care will breakdown.

References and Resources

13 Fatal Errors available at <http://www.personal.psu.edu/faculty/a/s/asm4/turfgrass/education/turgeon/casestudy/lawnpro/fatalerrors.html>

Blom, Alisa. 6 Key Competencies of Effective Managers. Training. March 24, 2014. Available at <https://trainingmag.com/6-key-competencies-effective-managers>

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