

4 mistakes team leaders should avoid



Team leaders can get ensnared in their own good intentions. The result can cause an admirable effort to backfire.

It's smarter to articulate a vision for the project and gain team buy-in. Then link your lofty vision with short-term action steps that participants must take in the days and weeks ahead.

Here are four mistakes team leaders need to avoid:

1. **Dwelling on the future** at the expense of the present. It's important to galvanize a team to think of exciting outcomes and possibilities. But you must also focus employees on tasks that require immediate attention. Too much discussion of a rosier future can divert people from making progress in the here-and-now.
2. **Expressing an overly complicated vision.** Keep the team's goals clear and simple. As a test, you want every member to be able to paraphrase the project's purpose accurately.
3. **Failing to set expectations.** Define how you—and the rest of the organization—will determine the team's effectiveness. If a project team does not know what you expect in terms of behavior and results, individuals may mismanage their time and lose their edge.
4. **Letting impatience sink morale.** Project teams often grapple with changing circumstances. As leader, you need to pave the way for the group to embrace change—even if some members need more time to adjust.

Annoyed at employees' slowness in accepting change? Keep it to yourself. If you're visibly disenchanted with your team for its inflexibility, you can demotivate the people you're trying to win over.

— Adapted from *Change Intelligence*, Barbara A. Trautlein, Greenleaf Book Group Press.