



**THESE 11 INACTIONS WILL KILL YOUR
REPUTATION AS A LEADER**

(What follows is a reprint from one of my Inc. columns (go to Inc.com and search “Scott Mautz” if you want to see more of my columns))

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For every action, there's a reaction. But for the leader's 11 worst inactions, there's a chain reaction--of undesirable consequences.

As a leader, you don't want to be defined by the things you *didn't* do.

Unfortunately, there's plenty of Monday morning quarterbacks who will take pot shots at you for the plays you didn't run.

So here's the rest of the playbook.

Take action on these painful omissions:

1. Failure to make a decision

Indecision can paralyze an organization. Multiple options can linger which bloats costs and timelines.

It kills a sense of certainty and completion, sapping an organizations energy.

Choosing not to decide is a choice, with consequences.

2. Failure to stop spin

This happens when the leader is out of touch and misses signals of stalled progress, such as missed milestones, repeat meetings on the same topic, or long quiet periods from the team.

Spin is further exacerbated when the leader is unclear on direction, role definitions, or success criteria or when they fail to align their boss.

3. Failure to resolve conflict in a timely fashion

Debate is a healthy and necessary part of business.

It's when the leader allows debate to devolve to harsh, lingering conflict that trouble arises. Stress and ill will builds as both sides spiral into an "us vs. them" mentality.

So cut off disrespectful behavior, deflate overly emotional behavior, and channel unproductive passion into high-energy, team oriented solutions.

And don't ask the troops to "work it out", that's a cop-out. Mediate if you must.



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4. Failure to reward and recognize

A missed opportunity to recognize is a missed opportunity to energize. It even creates doubts in employees minds. They wonder, "Am I working on the right things?", "Does my leader notice my efforts and accomplishments, or even care?", "Are my efforts not up to his/her standards?" It can manifest itself as a simple lack of feeling appreciated, which leads to a lack of feeling motivated.

5. Failure to inform

It's difficult enough to gain competitive intelligence, why would we withhold our own?

And it happens too often. How many times have you found out something too late, and thought, "It would have been nice to know that a month ago"?

As leaders, when we withhold information or don't make the time investment to share critical information, we handicap our organizations.

6. Failure to proactively manage change

If left to their own devices, employees often make the worst of change. Organizational psychologists have found that if employees can't make a link between change and their own goals and values, intrinsic motivation to embrace that change goes missing.

Have a plan to manage change, including enrolling the affected in the change, equipping them for it, and making a clear case for change in the first place.

7. Failure to take accountability

Nothing is more un-leader-like then when a leader misses the opportunity to stand up and take accountability, or worse yet, openly deflects it.

There's no recovery from this.

The troops expect it from you. And even when you're not accountable by personal involvement, you are by position power.

So own it.



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8. Failure to address underperformers

Rotten apples can spoil the orchard.

Nothing is more frustrating for employees, especially high-performers, then when dead-weight is allowed to continually burden the organization without retribution. Such individuals grow like a cancer and wipe out morale and a sense of fairness.

Get after it.

9. Failure to see around corners

The best leaders spend substantive time seeing around corners and anticipating problems by understanding their industry and competitors, and by asking "What if?" They stay on offense versus defense.

The key is to spend time seeing around corners, not cornering what you see. In other words, once you've pinpointed a problem, don't take it on by yourself. Enroll the team and address it together, which is far better for their learning anyway.

10. Failure to react quickly enough in crisis

Complacency has no place in great leadership. Be productively paranoid. At the first sign of a crisis, gather your core team of thinkers/problems solvers and ninja team of executors. Communicate quickly and frequently.

Mostly, act, don't ignore.

11. Failure to make an effort to connect

I once had a boss who said "The door is always open." The problem was the lower half was shut, like a bank teller counter, keeping me from getting close enough to connect.

People can read a lack of compassion and warmth a mile away, and they'll stay a mile away when they sense it.

So make the effort--it will make a difference.

Net, think of this post as a call to action to avoid damaging inaction.



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