

# CASE STUDY: Avoid this management miscalculation: Formal Authority + Bad Pride = Disaster

Industrial age, antiquated command and control style leadership still exists in organizations. Here's what to know and avoid.

**“Bad leaders believe that they have to project control at all times.”**

- Simon Sinek

Self-reflect to ensure you avoid these two common mistakes of failed leaders. Command and control leadership style, combined with unhealthy, ego driven pride, ultimately destroyed this leader's team. When Phil took over a \$75M business unit he knew this would be his “big opportunity.”



Eager to cement his image with “next level results” and to reduce expenses, he ousted from the company half of the legacy team who achieved positive revenue and profit growth trends. With those departures went decades of institutional knowledge and deep expertise with highly nuanced reporting systems and KPIs. He was overconfident his approach would yield better results, but when results failed to materialize, he blamed the faults of prior leaders. While not what he intended, within 180 days turnover increased, performance declined, and he was replaced.

Formal authority comes from position and title. Informal authority comes from relationships of trust from coworkers. Phil leveraged only formal authority magnified by ego and unintentionally created a corrosive culture. His direct reports complied for as long as bearable, but too often gave the minimal level of effort required to get “passable” results in a hyper competitive industry. The leader who replaced Phil invested deposits of trust into relationships. She earned the “hearts and minds” of direct reports who volunteered their best efforts to deliver world-class results. Here's the lessons:

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1. **Know when to be quiet, then listen and seek to understand.** Put ego aside. Acknowledge that your direct reports may know more about the nuts and bolts of the operation. Seek their expertise and their wins become team wins.
  2. **Be humble and confident.** The best leaders, with track records of people development and financial results, are confident in their tactics and strategy and have been around long enough to understand many people contribute to positive results. There are very few “lone wolves” who succeed all on their own, especially in large business units.
  3. **Check yourself.** Self-reflect and seek feedback. To what degree to you demonstrate “command and control” style leadership? Do you interrupt others mid-sentence, do you ignore data that is counter to your opinions, etc.?

# Put it to work...

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The table below highlight just a few behaviors of different leaders. Consider the questions below and self-reflect on how you can improve.

Leaders who are confident and humble demonstrate these behaviors:	Leaders who are ego driven demonstrate these behaviors:
<b>Talk candidly.</b> "Here's how I see the situation..." "These are the facts as I see them..." "This is what I understand..."	Posturing, spinning, manipulating, flattering. Speak in half-truths. "Let me interrupt you there.." "Here's the way it is..." followed by misinformation.
<b>Lend Trust.</b> "I believe in you..." "I trust you'll get the job done..." "You have my support..."	Lend trust they don't have by holding people accountable to results without giving authority or tools. Act like they trust a colleague, but then micro-manage.
<b>Show Respect</b> "I respect and appreciate you..." "What I respect about you is..." "We need your thoughts on this..."	Show respect for only those "above" in the org chart or to those in power.
<b>Clarify Intent</b> "Here's why I think..." "My intent is..."	Having hidden, or side, agendas. Creating an illusion that things are one way when reality is different. Withholding key data points.
<b>Make Wrongs Right</b> "I apologize..." "What needs to happen to correct this..." "What could I have done differently..."	Cover up, "sweep under the rug", distracts, Points to only facts and data that support their opinions while ignoring compelling data to the contrary.

Consider an important relationship at work or home. Write that person's name here. Use a code name if you're concerned about confidentiality.

How can you better demonstrate the behaviors of a successful leader? Think about your next interaction with this person. Write down what you can say or do based on the behaviors above.