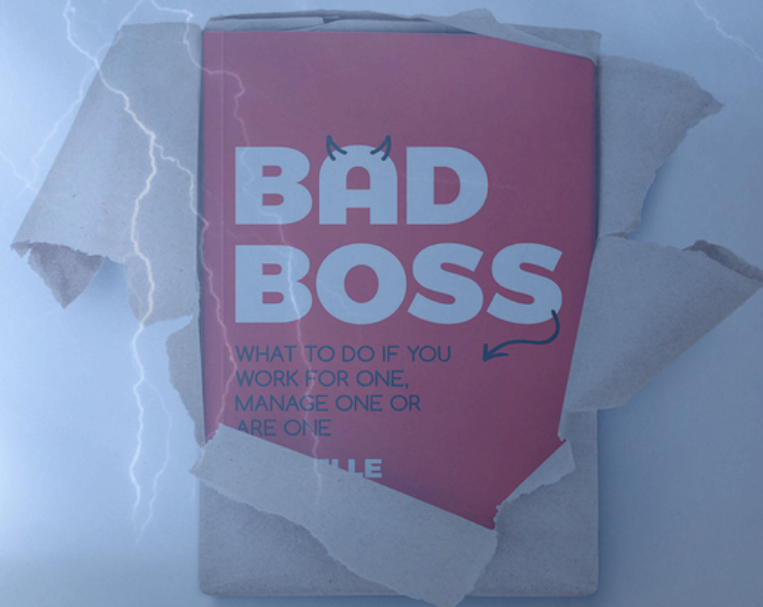




Bad Boss Online Resources

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Introduction

Hello,

Welcome to Bad Boss online!

This resource is your read-along guide for Bad Boss: what to do if you work for one, manage one or are one.

Inside you'll find activities and reference material, which you can use as you read the book.

You know the relationships you have at work are critically important – impacting your productivity, work satisfaction and mental health and well being.

So you can't afford to play safe, to stay small, not to take risks or be ready or willing to change.

The strategies I outline in Bad Boss are only useful if you do the work and complete these exercises. They require time, deep thought and reflection, potentially with the help of a trusted adviser, partner or colleague.

I wish you every success as you embark on this journey of discovery.

Stay well,



P.S. I'd love to hear how you go so feel free to drop me a line at michelle@michellegibbings.com.

Framework

Operate the release valve

The release valve has four key phases, applied to each of the three relationship levels identified. These four phases are shown in figure 1.4.

- **Phase 1: ASSESS**

The starting point for every position and role in an organisation is to assess what is going on, what impact it has on you and what may be its cause. You'll be asked to consider: is it them, is it me or is it the environment? (You'll likely find it's a combination of all three, but more on that soon.)

- **Phase 2: STRATEGISE**

Next, you'll consider and work through your options to determine the best strategic move given the circumstances and the role you are playing in the relationship. This will help you consider actionable approaches and steps to take.

- **Phase 3: ACT**

Here you begin to implement your chosen approach, all the while making sure you are taking care of your own wellbeing and that of those around you who are affected. This includes being fair and intentional, living according to your values and, when needed, being courageous.

- Phase 4: REFLECT

In this final phase you will reflect on your progress (or lack of it) and determine any next steps, especially if things are not going according to plan.

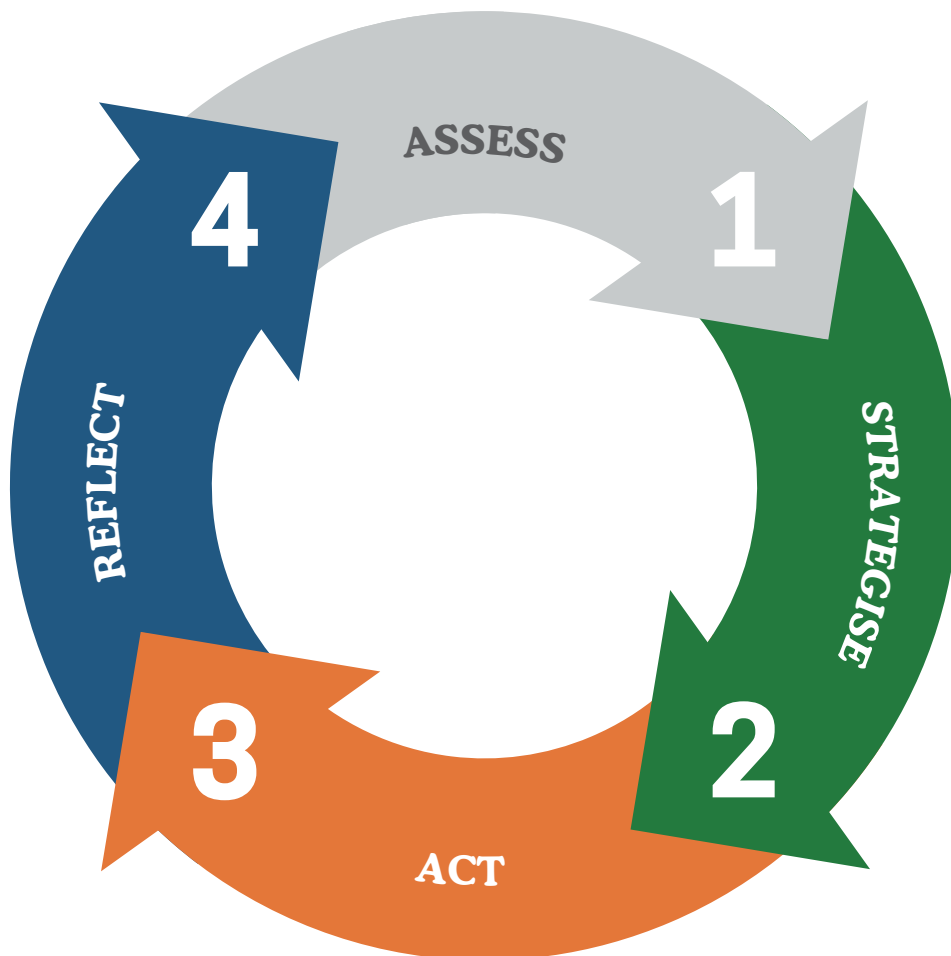


Figure I.4: the four phases to operating the release valve

PART I

What to do if you ...

WORK FOR ONE

Own your impact

TIME OUT

Are you firing on all cylinders?

- Are you taking time out to rest and recharge?
- If not, how is this impacting your work performance and your relationship with your boss?

Are you getting enough sleep?

- Is a lack of sleep impacting your work performance?
- If so, in what ways is this impacting your relationship with your boss?

Are you a meeting junkie?

- Is a lack of prioritisation affecting your work performance?
- If so, how is this impacting your relationship with your boss?

Are you always late?

- Do you frequently miss or push out deadlines?
- If so, are you letting your boss down?

Are you setting the bar too high?

- Are you setting yourself up for success by setting realistic goals?
- Are you over-promising, but under-delivering?
- If so, how is this influencing your boss's perspective on your work performance?

Continued on next page ...

TIME OUT

Do you avoid saying 'no'?

- Is your eagerness to please or fear of saying 'no' impacting your work performance?
- Do you have agreed boundaries with your boss in relation to working hours?

Are you the office energy thief?

- Do you get caught up in office politics and bring negative energy into the workplace, affecting how you work with people?
- If so, how is this impacting your boss's perspective of you?



TIME OUT

Do you avoid saying 'no'?

- Is your eagerness to please or fear of saying 'no' impacting your work performance?
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Put yourself in their shoes

THE DIFFICULT EMPLOYEE (HARD TO WORK WITH)	Yes/No?	THE EXEMPLARY EMPLOYEE (EASY TO WORK WITH)	Yes/No?
Do you:		Do you:	
Do the least amount of work possible?		Always try your best?	
Regularly deliver below expectations?		Deliver on expectations?	
Think the relationship is all about what you need?		Strive to build healthy and constructive working relationships with colleagues?	
Think it's solely your boss's responsibility to make the relationship work?		Recognise relationships are a two-way street and you play a part in making the relationship with your boss work?	

Challenge yourself

Complaint about boss	Challenge your consistency (Did you...)	Self-assessment (Yes / No)
They don't appreciate me.	Appreciate and congratulate yourself when you've done well?	
They don't back me enough.	Have the courage to back yourself by having the difficult conversations with your boss, saying no when you need to and asking for what you need?	
They don't invest enough in my development.	Set aside time and resources each year to support your growth and development?	
They don't help me progress my career.	See yourself as the leader of your career and take proactive steps to enhance both your career and, over time, your life?	
They are inconsistent.	Have focus and direction, stick to goals you've set and deliver on commitments, despite the challenges and setbacks?	
They don't treat people equally.	Treat yourself as well as you treat other people, finding time to meet your needs?	
They expect me to work harder than them.	Place realistic expectations on yourself or others about what can get done and by when?	
They are rude and unfriendly, and make me feel excluded.	Treat all people with fairness and dignity, seeking to understand their needs and what is going on for them, and to make them feel included?	

Assess your boss's style

Step 1: Get curious

The first step is to critically examine your perspective of your boss's level of awareness of their impact on others, and whether or not it's intentional, using the following questions.

Awareness of impact (unknowing vs knowing)

Ask yourself, do you feel and think:

- their behaviour is deliberate and intentional?

- they are aware of the impact they have on you and other team members?

If you have answered 'yes' to those two questions, then it is likely your boss is aware of what they are doing. Their behaviour is carried out knowingly. If your answer is 'no', it is most likely carried out unknowingly.

Awareness of impact (unknowing vs knowing)

Ask yourself, do you feel and think:

- their actions are primarily about them and their needs?

- they don't care about you and your needs?

- they ignore the challenges and workload you face?

- they show little interest in you as a person?

- they drive things too hard, disregarding the consequences for their team?

If you have answered 'yes' to those questions, then it is likely that your boss is taking a selfish approach to leadership, putting their own needs first. If your answer is 'no', they are selfless.

Find the points of intersection to determine what type of boss you have: mercenary, believer, illusionist or liberator.

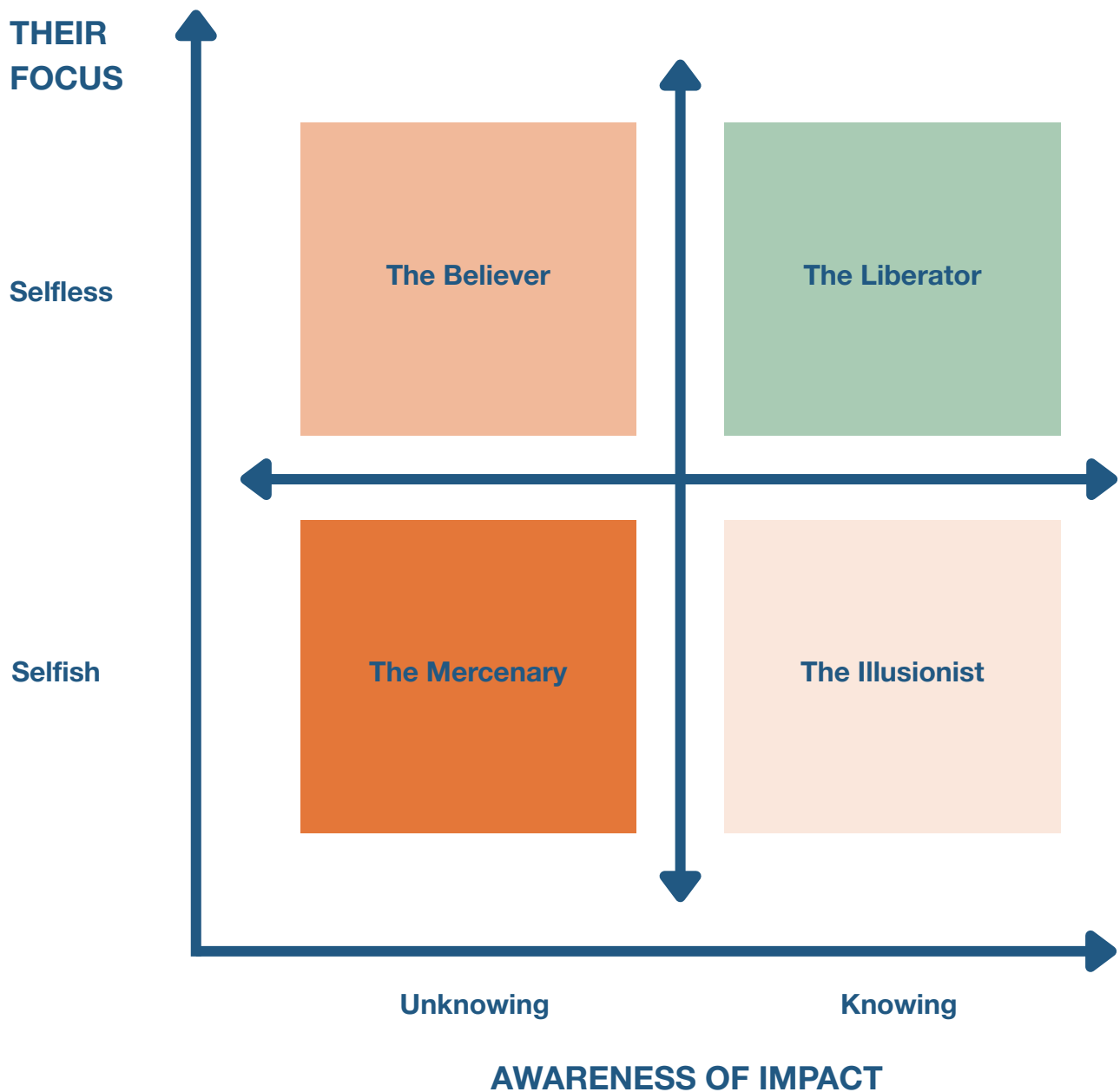


Figure 1.1: four types of boss

Step 2: Source other opinions

TIME OUT

- Are you being too harsh?
- Is your boss’s current behaviour out of character?



Lined area for writing responses.

Step 3: Check for mitigating factors

TIME OUT

- Are they under too much pressure from their boss?
- Is their workload unsustainable?
- Are their peers challenging to work with?
- Are there not enough resources in the team?
- Are they set up for success in the role, with the right team, the right resources, the right skill levels?
- Are they relatively new to the role and still settling in?
- What's happening in their personal life? Are they facing challenges on the home front?
- Has there been a recent change in their behaviour, and if so, what could be triggering that for them?



You go first

Step 1: Frame your vision

TIME OUT

- What and who inspires you, and why?
- When have you been most motivated?
- What angers, frustrates or disappoints you?
- What are your two or three most important values?
- What do you want to be known and respected for at work?
- What difference do you want to make to the people you work with?
- When people talk about you, how would you like to be described?
- When have you been most proud of who you are as a person?



Handwriting practice lines consisting of 15 horizontal blue lines.

Step 2: Write down your principles

Underpinning your vision statement are the guiding principles and behaviours you strive to live by each day as you bring your vision to life. Think of them as your 'I statements'.

I will...

- live life as an adventure
- be fair and deliberate
- make each day matter
- put myself in the other person's shoes
- exercise, meditate and laugh daily
- bring music into my life
- live by the adage 'If you can't say something nice, don't say anything'
- step into the courageous conversations
- reflect and look for learning.

What principles and behaviours do you want to guide your decisions and actions as you strive to improve your current working environment?

I encourage you to push yourself — just a little. The statements you write down need to be true to who you are and to your values, but you may also need to include behaviours that are a little bolder and braver than what you would normally do.

Challenge yourself: will these behaviours help or hinder your desired progress?



Know your currency



Figure 2.2: Maslow's hierarchy of needs, adapted for a workplace context



Table 2.1: Your work value gap

Level of derived value

The currency	Are these needs being met? Yes / No	Which needs aren't being met, and why?
Basic needs: Job, salary, other work related benefits, skills to do the job, workplace flexibility		
Safety needs: Job security, physical and mental security, workload		
Belonging: Feel like you are part of a team, connected to something bigger than you		
Achievement: Sense of professional achievement, feeling of job well done, new learning, career progression		
Self-actualisation: Satisfaction of achieving your full potential at work		

Increasing the value

While the value you derive from your work is likely to change over time, ideally you want to be able to increase the value you get from your current job.

TIME OUT

- What would need to happen for more of your needs to be met?
- What actions can you take to enable more of your needs to be met?
- What actions would your boss need to take to enable more of your needs to be met?
- Could those needs be met in other ways to make staying in this job more palatable?



Handwriting practice lines consisting of 15 horizontal blue lines.

Flip the boss lens

TIME OUT

- In what ways can you be more supportive of your boss?
- Do you know what your boss needs from you to help them be their best?
- If you were more understanding and compassionate about the challenges they face, what would you feel, think and do differently?
- If you adopt the perspective that they are doing their best, how does this change what you will say and do?



Negotiate your position

1. Be open-minded and open-hearted

TIME OUT

- Are you bringing your best self to this conversation?
- Have you picked a good time of day to have the conversation?
- Are you approaching this conversation with a growth mindset?
- Are you ready to open your heart, and to listen and learn?
- Are you ready to take accountability for your role in this relationship?



2. Have clear options

TIME OUT

- Have you done your homework?
- Do you know your motivations and needs, and is your intent sound?
- Have you identified the potential options and your desired outcome?
- What are you willing to trade off and what matters most to you?
- What are your concerns, assumptions or preconceived ideas about your boss and their likely reaction to this conversation?
- What are the biggest hurdles that could prevent this conversation from being successful?
- What are the biggest opportunities for you in this conversation?
- How much do you care about this conversation (both the person and the outcome) and why?



3. Understand your boss’s needs

TIME OUT

- What are their motivations and agenda?
- How have they responded to past requests?
- What’s currently worrying them?
- What are their likely objections?
- What’s their likely desired outcome?
- What’s the best time of day to have this conversation with them?
- Do they have the authority and resources to give you what you want?
- How much are they likely to care? What are the implications/consequences for them?



Handwriting practice lines consisting of 15 horizontal blue lines.

4. Conduct your pre-mortem

TIME OUT

- List all the reasons why this conversation (or whatever it is you are planning on doing) might be derailed. Include ideas that even on the surface seem completely implausible.
- What is the likelihood that those negative issues will occur?
- If they do, what are the possible consequences and what will you do to manage or mitigate them?
- In light of those insights, how will you approach the conversation with your boss differently?



5. Have resolve and see it through

TIME OUT

- Are you ready to accept the consequences — even if they are to your disadvantage?
- Does this matter enough to you that it’s worth the effort, energy and risk to invest in it?
- Are you ready to dig in, be courageous and have this conversation?



Aim for the 3 C's

1. Understand your mindset

TIME OUT

- Do you have a fixed or growth mindset?
- What are you learning today about yourself and your boss?
- What are you learning about what triggers different reactions in you?
- Are you open to change, welcoming the challenge of adapting and learning?



Handwriting practice lines consisting of multiple horizontal blue lines for writing.

2. Focus your energy

TIME OUT

- Is your locus of control internally or externally focused?
- Are you focusing your attention on things you can control or influence?
- What unproductive work habits are impeding your progress and depleting your energy?
- Are you grateful for what you have or forever frustrated about what you don't have?
- Do you regularly play the comparison game, comparing yourself and your circumstances with those of others?



3. Decide to act mindfully

TIME OUT

- Do you typically react mindfully or mindlessly?
- Do you notice what triggers your reactions?
- In stressful situations, do you breathe deeply, pause and reflect before you respond?
- Are you using regular practices like meditation to prepare yourself for stressful situations and enable good decision making?



Reflect, learn, and grow

TIME OUT

- How prepared were you for the conversation?
- Did you hold back from saying what you wanted to say? If so, why?
- What do you think was going on for your boss at the time?
- What was the outcome? Are you happy with the outcome?
- How did you feel at the start of the interaction (for example, busy, relaxed, distracted or something else)?
- Were you relaxed during the conversation (or not), and how did that affect the outcome?
- How did you feel by the end of the conversation?

Given all those insights, the next question to ponder is what will you do differently next time?



A progress stocktake

TIME OUT

- Are your expectations realistic and is it possible for further change?
- Is your boss capable of helping to secure your desired needs?
- What more can you do to have those needs met?
- Is the risk and effort involved in securing the change worth it?



Watch for the fallout

TIME OUT

- Are you clear about your line and comfortable you are not stepping over it?
- Are you being courageous and stepping into important conversations?
- Is the workplace culture positively impacting your thoughts and actions?
- Are you living true to your vision and principles and being your authentic self at work?
- Do you like the person you are when you are at work?

If you answered mostly 'yes', then your markers are largely on track. If you answered 'no', then I'd encourage you to think about whether you are okay with the impact the environment is having on you.



PART II

What to do if you ...

MANAGE ONE

Look for warning signs

- 1. Inconsistent behaviour.** Notice how the leader (your direct report) behaves in front of you, when other people are around, and in meetings with their peers or team. Consider if their behaviour is consistent, or if it changes based on who is in room.

- 2. It's always about them.** The leader never acknowledges the efforts of their team, always talks about themselves and what they need, and makes sure they always look good. It's about them winning and coming out on top.

- 3. It's never their fault.** The leader is reluctant to admit mistakes and seeks to blame others to ensure there is little or no scrutiny on how they need to change or improve. Similarly, their team appears to struggle to regroup and learn when things go wrong.

- 4. They won't compromise.** They are unwilling or find it very hard to change their mind, and seek always to get what they want, whether it's resources, rewards or approval of ideas. They rarely, if ever, compromise.

- 5. They don't back themselves.** The leader is overly compliant and unwilling to back what they stand for, so they don't back their team and what they need.

- 6. The leader's team is MIA.** You rarely engage with their team, and when you do the employees seem ill-informed and reluctant to talk to you. They seem to lack cohesion and focus, so you get a sense there is no 'team'. Your direct report never delegates meetings (involving you or more senior stakeholders) to their team members.

- 7. Concern for their team is missing.** When you ask about their team, the leader always merely insists everything is going well. They never ask for advice or help, and any issues you raise about their team are brushed aside.

- 8. They play favourites.** The leader always promotes one person in the team over the rest, and delegates the good work or rewards only to that one person.

- 9. They don't back their team.** Team members are rarely promoted, suggesting the leader may not be good at coaching and developing. Neither is the team diverse and inclusive, indicating the leader may only be hiring people who fit a certain mould.

- 10. The team seems stuck.** The work isn't delivered to a high quality and standard, so there's lots of rework and long hours, which can be a sign of stress and poor leadership focus.

Ask before they go

In the interview you might ask questions such as these:

Interview Sheet

Your name: _____

Date of interview: _____

Employee name: _____

Time of interview: _____

✓	What did you like most/least about your role?
✓	Did you have the resources, equipment and skills necessary to succeed in the role?
✓	If you could have changed one thing about your role, what would it have been?
✓	What did you learn about leadership while working in this role?
✓	When did you start considering leaving this role/organisation?
✓	How would you describe the organisation's/your team's culture?
✓	If you could change one thing in that culture, what would it be and why?
✓	Were you given constructive and regular feedback?
✓	Would you recommend this role to someone else?

Uncover the root cause

TIME OUT

- How is your leadership behaviour contributing to your direct report's behaviour?
- Is it helping or hindering their progress?
- Are you putting too much pressure on them?
- Are your expectations about what can get done by when, given the resources and other work on the go, unreasonable?
- Are you spending enough time coaching and supporting them?
- What more can you do to encourage them to bring their best selves to work?

It's easy to say you want great leaders and a healthy team culture, but are you demonstrating and rewarding behaviour to promote it?



Sanity check

Do you say you want...	But actually reward...
• A sustainable and flexible work environment and a happy healthy culture	• Long hours, overtime and an ‘always on’ culture
• To put people first	• Output, output, output
• Teamwork	• Individuals
• A safe workplace where people can be themselves	• A workplace where people conform and are compliant
• Open and transparent communication	• People saying what you want to hear
• Feedback on how you are progressing	• People saying nice things to you
• Continuous improvement	• Only surfacing the good news
• A collegiate environment where everyone advances and shares in the rewards	• An environment where it’s all about you and your success
• Responsible earning of profits?	• Profit at all cost incentive structures?



Culture doesn't fit

TIME OUT

- How is the work culture impacting your direct report? Is it productive or unproductive?
- Does this work environment bring out their best?
- If not, what would need to change for them to be able to bring their authentic self to work?



Lined area for writing notes.

They're out of the depth

TIME OUT

- Are there events occurring in their personal life that are causing stress and distraction?
- Is there an unusually high volume of work and too many tight deadlines?
- Is there a resource shortfall that is creating pressure?
- Do they appear overworked, fatigued and stressed out?
- Are there organisational changes underway that are creating uncertainty?
- Are there other workplace changes that could be impacting their behaviour?
- Do they have the technical competence to do their role?



What to do if it's you

TIME OUT

- What do they need from you to elevate their leadership growth?
- Are you spending enough time with them?
- Are there other changes you can make to help them grow?

Take a moment to reflect and write down the top five things you are prepared to stop, start or continue doing that will help them become a better leader. After you've done that, ask yourself the following questions:

- Is that likely to be enough, or will you need to step up and do more?
- How committed are you to helping them succeed?
- Do you have any hidden agendas? For instance, are you secretly hoping they won't make the grade?



What to do if it's them

- 1. Journey.** Understand their leadership journey to date, and what's shaped how they see the world and their role as a leader. Share your perspective on leadership, and how you've grown and changed as a leader. Get their input and perspective on their current leadership growth and development areas (what they do well and not so well, for example), and determine to what extent they are unconsciously incompetent, consciously incompetent or consciously competent.

It helps if you understand their context and mental frame of reference. Perhaps they've never been exposed to good leadership before. If they've never had a good role model, they are likely to struggle with understanding how to be a good leader.

- 2. Vision.** Talk to them about their leadership vision to discover what type of leader they want to be. This will help them set the leadership goals they aspire to achieve.

If they struggle with this idea, reading Part III of this book will really help them. Encourage them to write down their leadership vision, using the activity outlined in chapter 10.

3. **Mindset.** Uncover what type of mindset they are applying to their leadership work. Fixed or growth? Feast or famine? Being a leader is challenging, and it helps to apply a growth and feast mindset.

If they are unwilling to admit they need to change and take steps to improve, it's likely they are approaching the situation with a fixed mindset. If that's the case, there's work to do helping them confront the reality of their situation.



A series of 20 horizontal blue lines for writing, starting from the line where the pencil icon is located and extending down the page.

4. Action plan. Identify the key areas of behavioural change required and what specific actions they can take to make that happen. Get them to be as specific as possible. It's easier for them to execute change when they identify the steps to take every day to achieve their leadership vision. As part of this plan, you may need to set short and long-term goals, depending on whether issues have arisen because of temporary blips caused by workplace stress (or something else), or if there are more ingrained behavioural patterns that need to be addressed and altered. You'll also want to identify the specific support you can offer, which may be internally or externally sourced:

- **Internal support.** As their leader you'll provide this through coaching and mentoring, as well as support from HR, and internal training and development programs.
- **External support.** This will entail an investment in the services of an executive coach to provide support and challenge, or external training and development programs.

Remember, often you can offer the best support by being available, interested in them, and providing regular in-the-moment feedback and coaching.

Their goals and supporting action plan should be documented — and not just for legal reasons, but because when something is written down it's harder to forget. The writing process helps with their next step — establishing commitment.

Encourage them to read Part III of this book, which outlines a series of ideas and strategies they can implement to help them reach their leadership potential.



5. Commitment. You need to understand how committed they are and the level of energy they are prepared to devote to this.

Donald Sull and Charles Spinosa examined over a decade how promises are kept and broken in organisations. They found that promises are kept only about 50 per cent of times. What constituted an effective promise — that is, one that was most likely to be delivered — had five attributes. They are:

- **Public:** Promises that are made visible, monitored and completed in public are more binding. This is because it's harder for the employee to forget, whether deliberately or unintentionally.

Consider if there are ways the leader can safely share their development goals more broadly than just with you. It can be a powerful statement if they have the courage to share their development focus with their team, because it demonstrates a real commitment to change.

- **Active:** The commitment should be developed collaboratively, with the involvement of other people connected to the issue.

In the context of your scenario, this means you need to play your part in working with the leader collaboratively to develop their goals. To be effective, it can't be a one-way process.



- **Voluntary:** They are not coerced into agreeing to something they don't want to do. A person is more likely to follow through if they freely entered into the arrangement.

Consider what mechanisms are in place to ensure the leader is really buying into the process and isn't just saying what they think you want to hear.

- **Explicit:** All parties to the promise know who will do what by when. You play a role, and they play a role.
- **Mission-based:** The critical need for this promise is clearly articulated. Each party understands the rationale and importance of the request and invests time in the mission.



What to do if it's the environment

TIME OUT

- Do you respect diversity or expect everyone to be the same?
- Do you ensure everyone in the team feels included, or do you play favourites?

What does this tell you about what you need to do differently to better create an environment where everyone can be their best?



Lined area for writing responses.

Get ready to be real

Step 1: Plan

TIME OUT

- What are the biggest hurdles that will prevent this conversation from being successful?
- What are the biggest opportunities in this conversation?
- How much do you care about the outcome of the conversation?



Step 2: Deliver

TIME OUT

- What commitments were made in the conversation - by you and by your direct report?
- What are the next steps?



Step 3: Reflect

TIME OUT

- Did you achieve your desired outcome?
- If so, how? If not, why not?
- What would you do differently next time?



Lined area for reflection notes.

Should they stay or go?

TIME OUT

- Is the leader better, the same or worse with respect to their leadership behaviours?
- In which areas have they improved or not improved, and why?
- Where is further improvement needed, and why?
- Do they need more time to adjust?
- Do the strategies deployed need more time to bear fruit?
- Do the strategies need to change?
- Do you need to step up and do more to help?

It's not enough just to note if there has been improvement; you need to understand what has or hasn't driven the change.



Is enough enough?

To work out where your direct report currently sits, ask yourself some quick questions.

On change acceptance:

1. Have they willingly taken on board your performance feedback?

2. Have they acted on that feedback?

3. Have they shown genuine attempts to improve?

4. Have they put in the required level of effort?

If you answered 'no' to any of these questions, the leader is likely taking an 'intractable' approach to the challenge. If you answered 'yes' to all the questions, they are likely taking an 'adaptable' approach.

On level of effort:

1. Have they started to improve?

2. Are you comfortable with the amount of time you are spending coaching them?

3. Is that level of effort in line with your expectations, given the amount of progress made?

4. Is the focus required from you to help them shift their behaviour sustainable?

If you have answered 'no' to any of these questions, then the leader's impact on you and your time is likely to be 'intense'. If you answered 'yes' to all the questions, then their impact on you and your time is likely to be 'manageable'.

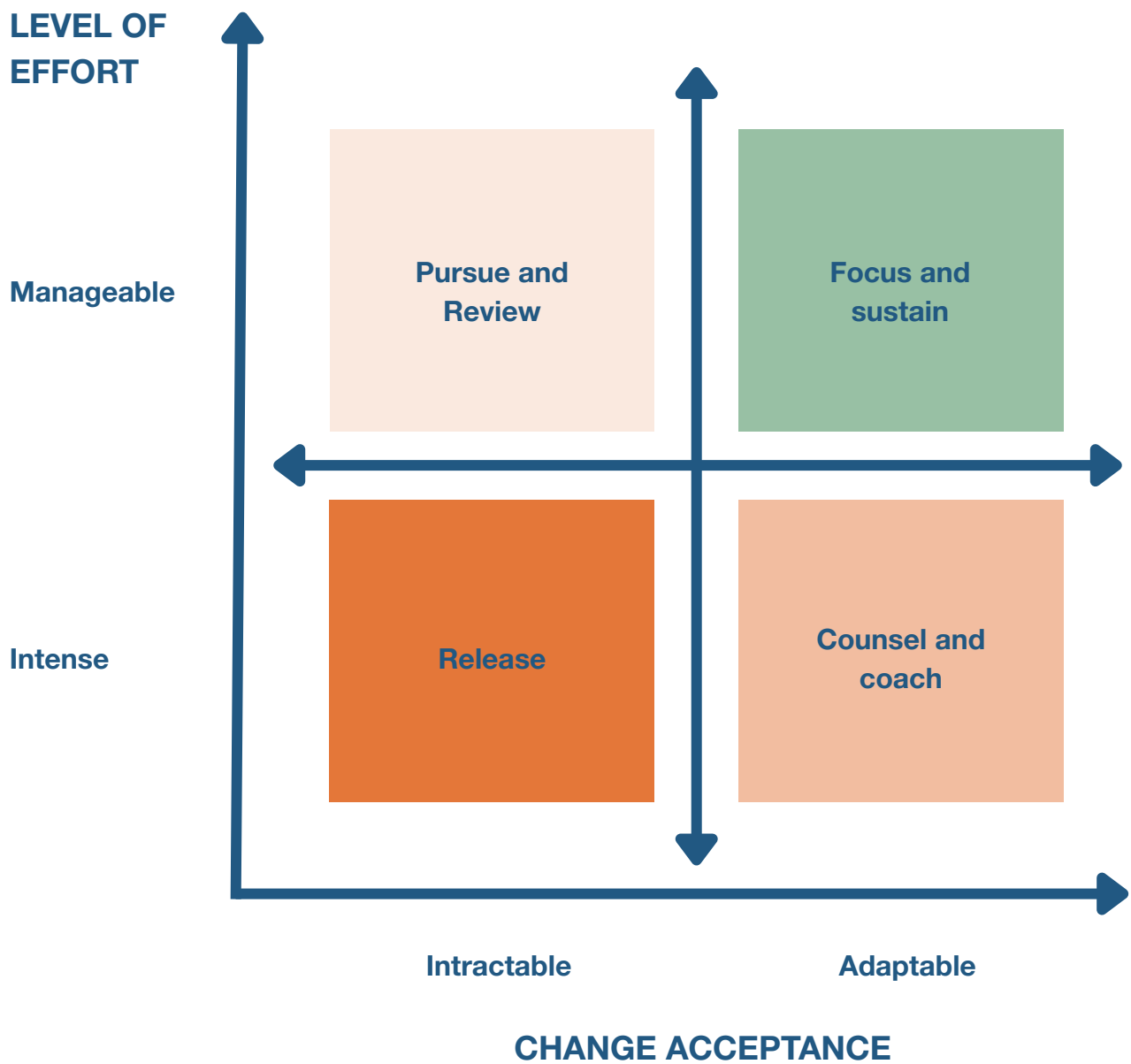


Figure 8.1 Effort versus acceptance

Find the points of intersection to determine your best potential course of action:

1. Release

If the level of effort required is intense, and their willingness to accept and adapt is almost nonexistent, then it's time to consider your options around their position. Is it time for them to trade this role for something else? Do they need to be moved to another role that has less leadership responsibility? If there are no internal options, do they need to look for options outside the organisation?

2. Pursue and review

If the amount of time you need to spend is relatively low, but you are also seeing little progress, then it's time to check your willingness to put in more effort and their ability to shift. Will investing more time and effort change the situation, or are you just delaying the inevitable? Do they need a different type of support? What's holding them back from wanting or being able to change? Are there other strategies that need to be deployed to support their leadership development? What more do you expect of them, and are those expectations realistic?

3. Counsel and coach

This can be tough. You feel like the leader is consuming enormous amounts of your time and energy, so much so that you aren't available for your other team members. However, they are trying to change, and you are seeing progress (albeit in small increments). I'd encourage you to keep going. Find out what more they need and what's holding them back. Consider if you've spent enough time coaching and supporting them and whether there are any mitigating circumstances that could have hampered their progress. As well, consider their understanding and acceptance of their lack of progress, and whether that's likely to change.

4. Focus and sustain

This is a great position to be in, as clearly the work is paying off. The leader is making progress to close their leadership gaps and you are happy with the level of effort you are putting in. Keep going.

Take a moment and ask yourself, is enough enough?

It's decision time

With a heart-based decision you ask yourself these questions:

- If I was courageous, what would I do?
- If I put the needs of others before my own, what would I do?
- If I examined this decision from an ethical perspective, would my decision change?
- If I took a compassionate approach, what would I do?
- Will I be proud to share my involvement in this decision with the people I most care about?



Handwriting practice lines consisting of 20 horizontal blue lines.

Lesson learned

TIME OUT

- Could you have acted sooner?
- Were there warning signs you missed?
- If you hired them, was there a failure or gap in the hiring process?
- What would you do differently next time?



Lined area for writing reflections.

PART III

What to do if you ...

ARE ONE

Pressure to perform

TIME OUT

- Do you wake up in the morning looking forward to work?
- Do you have a healthy and constructive relationship with your boss?
- Do you feel you're making progress at work on things that matter?
- Do you have enough resources and skills to do your job effectively?
- Do you rarely (if ever) have feelings of overwhelm and anxiety at work?
- Do you have healthy and engaged relationships at home and at work?
- Are you taking care of your mind, body and spirit through regular exercise and meditation, eating well and finding time for other self-care practices?



Lined area for writing reflections.

Green, yellow, or red?

Seven key leadership indicators:

1. Awareness
2. Authenticity
3. Mission
4. Mindset
5. Authority
6. Relationship style
7. Team norms

For each indicator, you will assess yourself, giving yourself a red, yellow or green card to identify any gaps requiring improvement.



Leadership indicator 1: Leadership awareness

Check the column that best represents your response.

DO YOU:	RED (RARELY)	YELLOW (SOMETIMES)	GREEN (USUALLY)
Spend time digging into your feelings, thought processes and behaviours to understand what motivates your actions?			
Notice when events or people at work trigger a 'fight or flight' response in you?			
Understand why you have been triggered?			
Reflect on the impact the working environment has on how you feel, think and act?			
Seek feedback on your leadership behaviours and practice?			
Know how people see you and describe you (that is, have a clear sense of your reputation and personal brand)?			

For this indicator, I am giving myself an overall card.

Leadership indicator 2: Leadership authenticity

Check the column that best represents your response.

DO YOU:	RED (RARELY)	YELLOW (SOMETIMES)	GREEN (USUALLY)
Have a leadership vision and values that are clear, transparent and lived?			
Exhibit consistent and reliable behaviours regardless of who is in the room?			
Hold firm to your moral compass and values regardless of the work environment?			
Have little to no gap between your stated values/leadership promise and your lived values/leadership practice?			
Own your behaviour, always acting with integrity?			
Own your mistakes, taking full accountability?			

For this indicator, I am giving myself an overall card.

Leadership indicator 3: Leadership mission

Check the column that best represents your response.

DO YOU:	RED (RARELY)	YELLOW (SOMETIMES)	GREEN (USUALLY)
Put others first, thinking about their needs, not just your own?			
Share the credit and rewards, being humble and generous?			
Ensure your team members feel valued, respected and recognised?			
Focus on building and developing your team?			
Proactively approach your team to offer support and ask what they need from you?			
Ensure your team members are set up for success?			
Seek to elevate people around you?			
Never get your team members to do things you yourself wouldn't be prepared to do?			
Not waste your team's time, ensuring you don't ask for things you don't need?			

For this indicator, I am giving myself an overall card.

Leadership indicator 4: Leadership mindset

Check the column that best represents your response.

DO YOU:	RED (RARELY)	YELLOW (SOMETIMES)	GREEN (USUALLY)
Share resources and ideas, knowing it will lead to better shared outcomes?			
Welcome the success and ideas of others?			
Feel secure about your abilities and employability?			
Promote the skills and successes of your team members?			
Provide positive feedback and recognition across the team?			
Cooperate for the general good, not just your own gain?			
Act ethically, always, in your dealings with others?			
Seek to 'collaborate and thrive', rather than 'divide and conquer'?			

Continued on next page ...

Leadership indicator 4: Leadership mindset

Check the column that best represents your response.

DO YOU:	RED (RARELY)	YELLOW (SOMETIMES)	GREEN (USUALLY)
Have clear and open ways of working, rather than hidden agendas?			
Enter a negotiation or discussion thinking how to best balance everyone's needs to get a fair outcome?			

For this indicator, I am giving myself an overall card.



Leadership indicator 5: Leadership authority

Check the column that best represents your response.

DO YOU:	RED (RARELY)	YELLOW (SOMETIMES)	GREEN (USUALLY)
Create collective power and seek to share it for the benefit of all, rather than using power as a weapon for personal gain?			
Manage the political game, as opposed to playing the political game?			
Share control and empower your team, rather than micro-managing?			
Use and share information to make better decisions?			
Have open and constructive debates with your team members in which they can challenge your opinions?			
Listen to other people, recognising you don't have all the answers?			
Consider all perspectives and recognise you don't hold an exclusive licence on being right?			

For this indicator, I am giving myself an overall card.

Leadership indicator 6: Relationship style

Check the column that best represents your response.

DO YOU:	RED (RARELY)	YELLOW (SOMETIMES)	GREEN (USUALLY)
Step into the tough conversations?			
Know your values, and willingly back them even if this means personal sacrifice or challenging perspectives of people senior to you?			
Focus on getting the best outcome rather than just pleasing people?			
ARE YOU:			
A builder of deep relationships and strong, compassionate networks, rather than being cynical, aloof and hard to get to know, creating shallow and transactional relationships?			

For this indicator, I am giving myself an overall card.

Leadership indicator 7: Team norms

Check the column that best represents your response.

DO YOU:	RED (RARELY)	YELLOW (SOMETIMES)	GREEN (USUALLY)
Establish practices to create psychological safety in your team?			
Spend time discussing and agreeing on the team's norms and ways of working?			
Have a clear team purpose that connects the team and how they work together?			
Deal quickly with any problematic behaviours that could impact team members and how they work together?			
Listen first and clarify, ensuring equal airtime, rather than dominating conversations?			
Use constructive emotions and actions to promote the right team dynamics?			
Have realistic expectations about what your team members can achieve?			

Continued on next page ...

Leadership indicator 7: Team norms

Check the column that best represents your response.

Do you:	Red (rarely)	Yellow (sometimes)	Green (Usually)
Have appropriate downtime and support so your team are managing their workloads well?			
Have an agreed way of dealing with work required outside of standard business hours?			
Make it easy for your employees to come to you with requests or questions?			
Encourage your team to switch off?			
Make time to troubleshoot problems with your team?			
Spend an appropriate amount of time in your working week with your team?			
Seek to raise your team members up to their highest level?			

For this indicator, I am giving myself an overall card.

Indicator 1: Open your heart and mind to awareness

TIME OUT

- What feedback sources currently exist or need to be established for you to get regular and reliable feedback?



Indicator 2: Close the authenticity gap

Writing your leadership manifesto will help. It will set out who you are, what you stand for and how you want to develop authentically as a leader.

There are four steps to this process:

1. Reflect on the current status
2. Shape your future
3. Get feedback
4. Live your manifesto

Let's look at each in turn.



Step 1: Reflect on the current status

TIME OUT

- What are the expectations or unwritten rules that shape how you feel, think and lead?
- Do these expectations and rules help or hinder your leadership?
- What would you need to do to stop adhering to these rules?
- How would those changes elevate your leadership practice?



Step 2: Shape your future

It’s now time to shape your future leadership vision. This is the ‘where you want to get to’ piece of the puzzle.

Consider the leader you want to be, by asking yourself:

- What type of leader do you want to become?
- If you had to brand your desired leadership style using one word, what would it be?
- Where and how do you want to leave your mark in this world?
- How do you want the people you work with to feel and talk about you?
- What do you want to be known for?



Step 3: Get feedback

Once you've spent time crafting and refining your leadership manifesto, the next step is to share it with a couple of trusted colleagues and friends. Get feedback from them and find out how it made them think and feel. Use that feedback to review and refine it.

Ask them:

- Was it inspirational, aspirational and authentically you?
- Did it resonate with them?
- Was it clear, concise and honest?
- Did it help them better understand your leadership journey — where you are now, and where you'd like to get to?



Step 4: Live your manifesto

As part of your leadership experience, it's really powerful to share your manifesto with your team. It will help them understand you, who you are, where you come from and what matters to you. I've seen leaders do this and it's a compelling way to build connection and trust across the team.

It's then your responsibility to bring that vision to life, hold it close to your heart, and notice when you are being authentic to your vision and when you are stepping away from it.

Use your manifesto to reflect on and remind yourself about the leader and, ultimately, the person you want to be.



Indicator 3: Accept your mission

TIME OUT

- If you opt to put the ‘we’ before the ‘me’, how would you lead differently?
- How would this change how you make decisions, share information, communicate, delegate work, and give and receive feedback?
- How would you consult and engage with your team to ensure you best support their needs?

Your answers become key elements of your ‘people first’ strategy.



Indicator 4: Develop a feast mindset

1. Listen to yourself — and discover what you are feeling, thinking and saying about the situation or event.
2. Recognise that you have a choice — to approach it with a famine mindset or a feast mindset.
3. Challenge your approach — the way you are feeling and thinking— and determine the likely impact this approach will have on you and your team.
4. Take action — approaching the situation in a way that best aligns with your leadership vision and who you want to be.



Indicator 5: Break your power addiction

TIME OUT

- What opportunities are there to share power across the team?
- Which meetings involving senior stakeholders can you delegate?
- Which working group meetings can you get your team members involved in?
- How can decision making be altered to better facilitate collaboration and input?
- How can you communicate and share information across the team more effectively?



Handwriting practice lines consisting of multiple horizontal blue lines for text entry.

Indicator 6: Build courageous and healthy relationship

TIME OUT

- Where are you stepping away from building diverse and authentic relationships?
- In what ways can you build deeper and more meaningful relationships?
- What conversations have you been putting off having, and what would be the benefit of having those conversations?



Indicator 7: Establish team norms and purpose

Example of a team agreement:

- We treat each other with trust, honesty and respect
- We support group decisions and don't try to undermine them
- We maintain confidences and have each other's back
- We understand our shared objectives and act on them collaboratively
- We always believe our teammates' actions are from a place of positive intent
- We seek to better understand the business context and use humility to achieve a win-win for the organisation
- We enjoy the journey together

My team's agreement:

Check your expectations

TIME OUT

- How can you ensure you are being fair with the expectations you place on each team member?
- Do you have preconceived ideas about particular team members? If so, how are these clouding your judgement or how you treat them?
- What actions do you need to take so you treat each team member with the same level of care and attention?



Let them be them

TIME OUT

- How can you better empower your team members?
- What would you need to change for your team members to have more autonomy?
- How are you encouraging each team member to be themselves?



Lined area for writing responses.

Mirror, mirror...

TIME OUT

- What data sources are available that you can use to assess your progress?
- How frequently can you access that data — daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly or annually?
- What does the data tell you about how you are doing?
- What does it tell you about where you could improve?

Setting up indicators is only helpful if you build a regular routine of checking the data, then spend time working out what it is telling you.



Five traps to trip you up

1. The ambition trap. For leaders who are used to success and always doing well, success can be addictive. They don't know how to step back from striving for it, and when the pressure at work rises their solution is just to work harder and keep going. If this is you, you worry that if you take your foot off the accelerator you'll no longer succeed.

2. The expectation trap. For leaders who are constantly living up to the expectations that are placed on them by those around them, admitting they are struggling and overworked seems impossible. They are so focused on doing what they are expected to do, they never get around to doing what they can do. When the pressure gets too much, they hide the impact and never share how they are feeling. If this is you, you worry that if you admit you are tired and struggling people will think less of you.

3. The busyness trap. It was Socrates who said, 'Beware the barrenness of a busy life.' Leaders who are caught up being busy and always 'on' struggle to say 'no', to slow down or to switch off. When the pressure gets too much, they are likely to explode as they are already close to burnout. If this is you, you will likely regularly sacrifice time with family and friends and even your health for work. Work comes first, and you see being busy as part of who you are. Be aware that this isn't a sustainable approach and eventually your body will force you to stop.

4. The translation trap. Many leaders have worked hard to get to their position, yet once they get there they find they aren't as happy as they thought they'd be. They feel like they are lost in translation: they wanted the role, but now they've got it the role doesn't fulfil or inspire them. If this is you, you'll feel like you have lost your way and your purpose. At the same time, you worry that if you change course you'll make the wrong decision, or that you don't know how to change because you think that what you currently do is all you can do.

5. The self-care trap. Many leaders get by on adrenaline alone, not taking enough time to care for their mind, body and spirit. They forget that putting their self-care needs first is a critical act of leadership. If this is you, then you are likely to feel run down, tired and overworked, and you say to yourself 'I'll get on to this tomorrow', but tomorrow never comes. One day you'll wake up and find that exhaustion, adrenal fatigue or some other health issue stops you in your tracks.

Culture check

TIME OUT

- Are you proud of the organisation's culture?
- Is the organisation's culture having a positive impact on your leadership?
- Does the organisation's culture enable you to bring your whole and best self to work every day?
- Are there times when you find yourself stepping away from who you want to be as a leader in order to try to fit the organisation's culture?
- Are there aspects of yourself you need to hide from your team members, peers, boss or colleagues for fear of retribution, recriminations or exclusion?
Can you be authentically you?

Every day you need to check in and ask yourself: Am I being authentic and living true to my leadership vision?



Notes

A portrait of Dr. Michelle Gibbings, a woman with blonde hair, wearing a bright red long-sleeved blouse and a black skirt. She is standing against a dark blue background, with her hands clasped near her chin and a slight smile on her face.

ABOUT DR MICHELLE GIBBINGS

Dr Michelle Gibbings is an award-winning author and globally recognised workplace expert who helps leaders, teams, and organisations elevate their strategic influence to accelerate progress. With over 30 years of experience, including in senior executive roles, she understands how organisations operate from the inside out.

As a sought-after keynote speaker, executive coach and trusted facilitator, she works with forward-thinking organisations seeking to empower leaders of today and tomorrow to thrive through complexity, unlock greater self-awareness and make powerful, wise and congruent choices. Choices that better serve their colleagues, organisation and career.

Her work focuses the spotlight on the shifting paradigms of work. Her books are must-have tools for both employees and managers, including *Step Up: How to Build Your Influence at Work*, *Career Leap: How to Reinvent and Liberate Your Career*, and *Bad Boss: What to Do if You Work for One, Manage One, or Are One*.

Michelle's approach is pragmatic, inspiring and anchored in insight and action. She helps people stay cool, calm, and collected amidst complexity, and bold, brave, and balanced in the face of disruption.

She gets organisations, leaders and teams ready for tomorrow, today!

NEXT STEPS

Thank you for taking the time to work through the exercises from my book, *Bad Boss: What to Do if You Work for One, Are One or Manage One*.

I'd love to hear your key takeaways.

If you're ready to explore what's next, you can reach out to support@michellegibbings.com. I'd be delighted to continue working together.

My executive coaching is designed to help you step forward with clarity and confidence, supporting your growth, strengthening your leadership capability, and helping you secure meaningful and sustained career progress.

Getting you ready for tomorrow, today. ®

Michelle

