

Why Smart Managers Fail

Getting the job done isn't enough if the manager destroys the relationships within the working group in the process.

The higher the level of the managerial job, the less important technical skills and cognitive abilities are and the more important Emotional Intelligence becomes.

Emotional competence is particularly central to leadership, a role whose essence is getting others to do their jobs more effectively.

Leaders with inadequate interpersonal skills:

1. Lower everyone's performance.
2. Waste time.
3. Create acrimony.
4. Corrode motivation and commitment.
5. Build hostility and apathy.

A leader's strengths or weaknesses in emotional competence can be measured in the gain or loss to the organization of the fullest talents of those they manage.

Close to 90% of leadership effectiveness is attributed to Emotional Intelligence.

For star performance in all jobs in every field, Emotional Intelligence is twice as important as cognitive abilities. For success at the highest levels in leadership positions, Emotional Intelligence accounts for virtually the entire advantage.

The two most common traits of managers who failed were:

1. Rigidity:

They were unable to adapt their style to changes in the organizational culture, or they were unable to take in or respond to feedback about traits they needed to change or improve. They couldn't listen or learn.

2. Poor Relationships:

The single most frequently mentioned factor in failures was being so harshly critical, insensitive, or demanding that they alienated those they worked with.

These traits proved fatal handicaps, even to brilliant executives with strong technical expertise.

One executive described a derailed colleague this way:

He’s a great strategic thinker and he has high ethical standards, but he lashes out at people. He’s very smart, but he achieves superiority through demeaning others. Many people have tried to help him work on this flaw, but it seems hopeless.

Differences between successful managers and those who failed:

Competence	Managers Who Failed	Managers Who Succeeded
Self-Control	Handled pressure poorly and were prone to moodiness and angry outbursts.	Stayed composed under stress, remained calm and confident and dependable in times of crisis.
Conscientiousness	Reacted to failure and criticism defensively, denying, covering up, or passing the blame.	Took responsibility by admitting mistakes and failures, taking action to fix the problems, and moving on.
Trustworthiness	Were overly ambitious and too ready to get ahead at the expense of other people.	Had high integrity, with a strong concern for the needs of subordinates and colleagues and for the demands of the task at hand.
Social Skills	Lacked empathy and sensitivity and were often abrasive, arrogant, or intimidating to others. Some were charming on occasion and even seemed concerned about others, but the charm was purely manipulative.	Were empathetic and sensitive and showed tact and consideration in dealing with others.
Building Bonds	Were insensitive and manipulative and failed to build a strong network of cooperative, mutually beneficial relationships.	Were able to get along with all types of people.

In a study of managers who failed, most were technically brilliant. Their technical skills were often the very reason they were promoted into management in the first place. Once they reached higher positions, their technical strength became a liability. Arrogance led some to offend others by acting superior. Others micromanaged subordinates, even those with better technical expertise.

People who are promoted because of expertise find themselves at a new level where many or most duties revolve around managing people, not technical skills.