



For Managers, Principals, Team Leaders and Internal Consultants

Author: Henry Blatman

Issue No 32: Career Clangers and how to fix them – Part 1

Sent to subscribers periodically throughout the year.

Please pass on **be your best** to people in your network.

To change your email address, give feedback or be removed from this list please reply to this email address.

Backcopies of the **be your best** online report can be downloaded from my new website at www.icleadership.com.au/reports.htm

Word count for this issue: 1565 words

Approximate time to read: 61/2 minutes

Career Clangers and how to fix them – Part 1

It's true that nobody is perfect and not everybody does, (or aspires to), a management role and upward advancement in their careers, however, for those who do there are Career Clangers that can hold up or prevent advancement, that are good to be aware of. One aspiring manager I knew worked for one of the large fast food chains and lamented to me her inability to make it past assistant manager and could not understand why. It did not take me long to realise that she was blind-spotted as to what was holding her back from promotion: she possessed the classic career clanger of arrogance that blocked her from seeing her part in her lack of progress. This manager has now left the fast food chain and will only progress in her career when she is willing to take responsibility for her lack of advancement.

While the reasons that people can be held up or slowed down in their career aspirations are many and can be quite complex, I still believe that there are some classic career clangers – in fact, I've identified ten – and highlighting these might just help you avoid or overcome them and indeed make your career prospects a little brighter! Although it is always easier to identify where others are going 'wrong' (and I encourage you to keep doing this), I really challenge you in this report to see where you might be guilty of a clanger or two and think what you might learn from that or do differently in future.

Ten Classic Career Clangers (in no particular order)

1. Way too ambitious

Ambition is a good thing. Well placed ambition drives people to do well and to help others do well. Those who I define as 'way too ambitious' are often only thinking of themselves and will make wrong decisions or give wrong advice purely because their focus is narrow – my success at all costs – rather than having a true leader's focus which is 'How can WE be successful'. The 'me only' focus is short-term, burns bridges and cuts corners. These are the individuals we have all encountered who take credit for other people's work and chest beat about themselves only, at any opportunity. These things come back to bite and diminish reputations over time. Smart companies know that individuals who operate like this are often liabilities to their organisations because they don't have the interests of the organisation and other team members at heart.

Tips to fix

- Get realistic feedback from staff, peers, managers or mentors around you – and listen to it.
- Don't focus as much on working it out with your manager (demanding their attention and strokes), focus on your team and peers – Get some runs on the board.
- Constantly ask yourself, (in relation to your clients and staff), how can I be of more value to them?
- Seek assistance from a manager or mentor who will tell you the truth and support your endeavours to change.
- Listen to others and spend less time talking about yourself, (you learn more by listening than talking).

2. Way too nice

Nice, polite management is appreciated by most people. Being overly concerned about whether people like you and avoiding hard conversations or decisions to avoid conflict is detrimental to building a successful career. As Peter Friedes says, (in "The 2R Manager"), "Managers must be able to Relate and Require. The best managers possess the ability to do both well and know when to choose one over the other".

Avoiding the hard conversations ultimately compromises the trust and respect people have for you as well as the quality, results and the development of those around you.

Tips to fix

- Get realistic assessments from staff, peers, managers or mentors.
- Complete Self – Assessment in the book "The 2R Manager" by Peter Freides or complete half day workshop ([contact](#)).
- Commit to being more requiring – with commitment you are more than half way there. Learn the language of requiring from others.
- Get clear with your team on the performance you expect and put in place with a process to monitor it.
- Ensure you deal with under performance quickly. It rarely improves because "you wish it too".
- Consciously challenge the guilt feelings and find ease with the requiring side of managing your team or giving people feedback.

3. Lack of discipline

This person is the one who can't meet deadlines, changes appointments several times and whose desk is such a mess that they often find things missing or spend a lot of time trying to locate the information. Their attention to detail is so poor that often they will be repeating work or sending it out incomplete or just plain wrong. While many people can manage to get through life being disorganised themselves, by far the most damaging part of this is the impact it has on the productivity and well being of others.

Tips to fix

- Get realistic assessments from staff, peers, managers or mentors on what effect your lack of discipline has on them.
- Get into the habit of handling a document and then putting it in a pile to do now, do later, file it or dump it.
- Read or re read *be your best* reports on creating more time in your day. ([Part 1](#) and [Part 2](#)).
- Have staff around you who are well organised and who can assist you and help you be successful, (not people who will do it for you or just cover your weaknesses).
- Rebuild trust with people by making an effort to deliver ahead of schedule

4. Arrogance

We have all experienced people who are arrogant. They usually prefer their own ideas and no one else is as good as them or thinks as well as them. Their body language will be dismissive of the views others. Arrogance is hard to pin point and harder to do something with as most people are reluctant to confront or give feedback to arrogant people as they are fearful of more put downs or reprisals. Arrogant people don't see how their behaviour affects others. So either their career stalls or they move from job to job, blaming others for their failures. It is well documented that successful people know themselves and continue to work on knowing and understanding who they are, what their strengths and weaknesses are and, importantly, how this impacts others and their relationships with others.

Tips to fix

- Get realistic assessments from staff, peers, managers or mentors. Maybe anonymously to ensure you get the feedback.
- Take your attention from you to others. Watch how they approach you. Are they willing or hesitant? If hesitant, make them feel comfortable with an offer to sit down. Talk about them and what is going on for them. Ask for their views.
- If you see that you have skills and intelligence others don't - then see yourself as a teacher and believe in others' ability to learn.
- Before you provide 'critique', examine your motives. Are you intending for improvement or is it competitive? If it's the later, challenge yourself to change the focus or just don't say anything.
- Look for opportunities to share credit with others.

5. Unwilling to learn

These people are stuck in the past and will often say, "This is the way we do it," or, "We have always done it this way." They refuse to listen to other views or to adapt to new ways of working. The classic case is someone who

refuses to adopt a new technology or process an organisation is committed to. These people may be good at what they currently do, but inevitably they find that their careers stall as the pace of change today overtakes the skills they possess. And this can apply equally to both young and older members of an organisation.

Tips to fix

- Listen to what people are saying about you. If more than one is giving you feedback on your lack of willingness to change - listen. If you don't it could be at your own peril.
- Challenge yourself to do something different at work or in your personal life. Go to a different place for your lunch or use different pens for writing. When a suggestion for something new is made at work try being willing to take it on without too much analysis.
- Volunteer to be involved in project teams to come up with something new. See yourself as someone who can make a contribution and a difference. Don't throw out your current skills and capabilities- build on them!

The next step

While most people are not at the extreme ends of the clangers I described above, it is important to ask yourself, 'Of those described, which ones hold some truth about me?' Use the above as a checklist for yourself, your business partners or your team members. Get a realistic appraisal (seek outside assistance if blocked) and then set about remedying the situation. There are countless good books and excellent coaches around to help people become the colleagues, managers and leaders they really want to be.

Next time

Watch for the next *Be Your Best* with Career Clangers, Part 2, and how to fix them – these include Lack of strategic thinking, Lack of ethics, Lack of patience and Low or variable performance.

"We don't see things as they are. We see things as we are." Anais Nin

© 2005-2008 Henry Blatman. All rights reserved. You are free to use material from the **be your best** online report in whole or in part, as long as you include complete attribution, including live web site link. Please have the attribution read as follows:

"By Henry Blatman of ic leadership. Please visit Henry's web site at www.icleadership.com.au for additional articles and resources on developing better leadership in your business.

Henry Blatman
Leadership and Performance Coach
Ph: 61 3 9699 7771