



For Managers, Principals, Team Leaders and Internal Consultants

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### **Issue No 33: Career Clangers and how to fix them – Part 2**

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#### **Career Clangers and how to fix them – Part 2**

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In the last issue of the *be your best* report I introduced the notion of the 'career clanger' and gave you ideas of what some of them are and how you can avoid, or at least self-regulate, around them. The five clangers discussed in part one were: Way too nice, Way too ambitious, Arrogance, Lack of discipline and Unwillingness to learn.

In this issue, I continue on the theme of career clangers by introducing you to five more "clangers" and again provide tips for recognising and dealing with them.

When going through the process of identifying the "clangers" or weaknesses it can be construed as negative. The sentiment can be, "that you are always looking for negatives in yourself or others". It's important to reiterate it is not meant to be about giving you tools to 'judge' (others or yourselves). This is about empowering you by naming some potential pitfalls and giving you ways of recognising and 'getting real' about what can lead to negative impacts on your career and on your organisation.

#### **Classic Career Clangers – Part 2 (in no particular order)**

##### **6. Lack of ethics**

For many years the word ethics was a mystery to me. It was some abstract word that I thought I knew but was hard to define. These days, with more grey hair perhaps, I have come to realise that it simply means "no harm to another". It means no harm to others financially, (normal commercial dealings

acceptable) and no harm personally. While the boundaries of what is and isn't "unethical behaviour" can blur, it is vital that each company have a clear articulation of what 'we' mean by ethical behaviour and the 'rules' that sets up for us. These rules need to apply to everyone in the organisation so that, for example, the sales manager who exceeds his targets but does so in ways that are unethical is not applauded and given exemption from the rules.

#### **Tips to fix**

- Be clear (or seek clarity) about what ethical behaviour means, specifically, in your company.
- Get realistic feedback from staff, peers, managers or mentors around you – and listen to it.
- Leaders must walk the talk and display ethical behaviours without exception: they set the tone and the example. Question your own ethics – what does 'ethics' mean to me? How do I show my ethical standards? Does my behaviour match the ethics of the organisation I work in?
- Seek assistance from a manager or mentor who will tell you the truth and support your endeavours to change.

### **7. Strategic Thinking**

Simply put it's the ability and willingness to be future-oriented.

If given a set of plans, most people could contribute something to the construction of the building. While that building is being constructed, a strategic thinker will start to see the design and location of the next building. He or she may see a different way of building, that breaks the shackles of the past, like speeding up construction, (as Grollo did with the Eureka Tower in Melbourne), or have points of difference that make it attractive to the target purchaser. In most industries there are many people that can build and build well. What is needed to enhance your career is the capability to conceive and bring others along to create a different future.

#### **Tips to fix**

- Get used to strategic language. Read books on strategy and start to change your perspective on things (For example read [Competing for the Future](#) by Hamel and Prahalad)
- Be aware of your own risk profile and challenge your thinking. I am not suggesting you bet your own house on some venture. Start small and have a go at something new and untried. If it does not work try again or try something else.
- Put aside some time each week to do some strategic thinking about your role – where does it fit, are the activities I am doing contributing to the whole the way they are meant to? If not, what needs to change?
- Keep company with Strategic thinkers and learn from them. Join business groups such as [The CEO Institute](#).

### **8. Patience and Composure**

We all know someone who flies off the handle when things don't go the way they should. No one likes to be the recipient of a tirade, and most people do not feel great about themselves after they've displayed such out of control

behaviour. From the many staff surveys I have conducted over the last 12 years it's clear that staff highly respect managers who exercise patience and composure.

Projects often take longer than they once did because of the scale and the complexity of business issues today. Life also presents us with unexpected events and situations where no matter how good your offering, you lose a valuable tender or client. The test of a leader in this situation is to be able to resist the impulse to release the build up of stress inappropriately.

#### **Tips to fix**

- Get realistic assessments from staff, peers, managers or mentors on "how you behave when faced with unexpected events"?
- Be aware of what it is that you are feeling and catch your discomfort, fear, anger as it is starting – not leaving it until it's too late and then exploding. The best leaders and managers have a very good understanding of themselves and can self-regulate. (See Daniel Goleman's book on [Emotional Intelligence](#) ). This means being more aware of your body sensations which alert you to your emotional state. Simply being able to 'name' what it is that you feel, e.g. 'I am starting to feel frustrated', is a first step in emotional intelligence – this can be, dare I say, quite hard for many men in particular.
- Use Yoga or have a course of remedial massage to get you more in touch with your body and its sensations.
- Resist the impulse to say something. Breathe. Count to 10 and then see what comes up for you to say – Invariably it will be different and probably more effective
- Accept differences in people. Everyone works differently and has different pace, style and preferences for task vs people.

### **9. Low or inadequate performance**

When you are questioned about your performance it is time to sit up and take notice. In most organisations under-performance will not be tolerated for any length of time and nor should it. It's very de-motivating for members of a team to work around someone who is not performing well.

Before rushing to find some solution to the under-performance it's important to question what is causing it. Is it some personal circumstance or a challenging task that the person is unqualified to handle? Or is it something more endemic to the system like inadequate performance management. A simple way to avoid under-performance over time is to always have clear performance expectations set, (and preferably documented and agreed with employees), and to provide feedback – both positive and negative (not only the bad), and regularly. Every 4-6 weeks is a benchmark set by companies who have well performing and engaged staff.

Alternatively, it may be something habitual like inability to set priorities, unwillingness to learn new processes or the old stager -procrastination. These can be fixed and the sooner the better.

### **Tips to fix**

- Do you fear that you might be under-performing (or even perceived to be)? If so, sit down with your manager (or outside coach) and ask for a clear and thorough assessment of your performance – good and bad. Map out a learning and development plan to ensure you have all the skills to get the job done. State any blocks you may have to getting the job done but also be prepared to think up solutions too – don't just provide complaints, be part of the answer too.
- Learn more about the strengths you and your team do have and how you can best harness them.
- Assess your organisation skills and resources. Learn to negotiate what you need to get the job done and learn better self management skills to enable you to get more done each day.
- Watch that you don't over promise. It's better to under promise and over deliver. Things do take time and often more than we envisage.

### **10. Technical Focus**

It may be obvious but it's clear - the best technicians often do not make the best managers. One reason is they are so interested in the technical aspects of their job they forget about all the other important bits that need to be attended to as you progress in an organisation. Sometimes you can see this in entrepreneurial companies when the technical expertise of the founder is not enough to sustain an organisation in the long term as they find it hard to manage structure (See [E-myth by Michael Gerber](#)).

### **Tips to fix**

- Listen to what people are saying about you. If more than one is giving you feedback on being too narrowly focused - listen.
- Read a book or attend a workshop
- Go overseas and observe the rest of the world. Build networks with capable and well rounded managers. Learn, Learn and Learn.
- Seek out mentors and coaches who are willing and able to transfer better management and leadership skills to you
- Pass on your technical expertise to others so you can move on.

### **The next step**

As I suggested last month, ask yourself if any of these clangers hold some truth for you? Use the above (together with last month's [report](#)) as a checklist for yourself, your business partners or your team members. This checklist is a thinking tool so that you can better shape your career. Be patient with yourself and you will become the colleague, manager and leader you want to be.

*"The thing that motivates and gets me excited is when my coach is honest with me and the team"* Sam Lonergan (Current AFL footballer)

**Additional Reading:**

- FYI – A guide for development and coaching – Michael Lombardo and Robert Eichinger
- Working with Emotional Intelligence – Daniel Goleman
- The E-myth revisited – Michael Gerber
- Average to A+: Realising Strengths in Yourself and Others – Alex Linley

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