7

Signs You Might Be a **MISLEADER** Without Knowing It

Based on the book
Leaders and Misleaders by Adeniyi

Contents

Introduction

You may have never meant to be a misleader. Most leaders don't. But leadership isn't defined by your intentions—it's measured by how your team experiences you. In today's fast-paced world, even well-meaning managers can unknowingly slip into habits that damage morale, silence innovation, and create fear instead of trust.

This guide highlights seven subtle signs of misleadership. If you see yourself in a few of them, don't panic. Recognizing the problem is the first—and most powerful—step toward change.

1. You Talk More Than You Listen

Great leaders listen more than they speak. When a leader dominates every meeting or interrupts frequently, it sends a signal that only their voice matters. This silences collaboration and suppresses innovation.

🧠 Reflection: How often do I pause to hear unspoken concerns from my team?

💡 Try this: In your next meeting, speak last. Ask others to go first and affirm their input.

2. You Confuse Fear with Respect

There's a thin line between a team that respects you and a team that fears you. If people always say 'yes' but never challenge you, you might be leading through fear. Fear breeds silence, not loyalty.

🧠 Reflection: When was the last time someone disagreed with me—and I welcomed it?

💡 Try this: Ask your team for honest feedback. Say, 'Tell me one thing I could do better.'

3. You Avoid Difficult Conversations

Leadership isn't about being liked—it's about being effective. Avoiding tough conversations (about underperformance, toxic behavior, or conflict) creates confusion and resentment.

🧠 Reflection: Who have I been avoiding a necessary conversation with?

💡 Try this: Schedule one difficult—but overdue—conversation this week. Lead with empathy, not blame.

4. You Think Visibility Equals Performance

Some of your best performers are quiet. Others may not show up to every optional meeting. Judging contribution based on visibility—rather than output—creates an unfair and biased culture.

🧠 Reflection: Am I valuing presence over actual results?

💡 Try this: Review team wins this month. Who's contributing behind the scenes but rarely gets credit?

5. You Constantly Jump In to Fix Things

Micromanagement often looks like helping—but it signals you don't trust your team. Leaders who can't let go of control end up creating dependent teams and burnout.

🧠 Reflection: What task am I holding on to that I should delegate?

💡 Try this: Let someone else fail forward. Coach, don't correct immediately.

6. You Play Favorites Without Realizing It

Even unintentional favoritism breeds resentment. If only a select few get praise, promotion, or inside access, others feel undervalued. This erodes morale fast.

🧠 Reflection: Who haven't I acknowledged in a while? Who's overdue for growth or opportunity?

💡 Try this: Privately recognize someone who normally stays under your radar.

7. You Rarely Reflect on Your Leadership

You reflect on projects, profits, and plans. But do you reflect on how your leadership is felt? Leaders who fail to reflect drift into bad habits without realizing it.

🧠 Reflection: What's one piece of feedback I've ignored because it was uncomfortable?

💡 Try this: Set aside 15 minutes weekly to journal about your leadership wins and missteps.

What Now?

If some of these signs hit close to home, it doesn't mean you're a bad leader—it means you're self-aware enough to change. The best leaders are always learning, always growing.

To dive deeper into the stories, systems, and strategies that separate great bosses from toxic ones, get your copy of:

📘 *Leaders and Misleaders: How to Be a Great Boss and Avoid the Traps of Terrible Leadership*

Available now on Amazon. Or connect with me directly:

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