

6 Things Bad Bosses Always Fear (But Great Leaders Always Do)

It could mean the difference between success and failure.

By Marcel Schwantes

March 31, 2018

Inc. Magazine

Peter Drucker famously said: "Culture eats strategy for breakfast."

The quote was actually attributed to him and made famous in 2006 by Mark Fields, chief executive at Ford.

Twelve years later, it's corporate-speak for purpose-led and human-centered businesses, and **truth is, culture eats strategy for lunch and dinner too.**

The premise held by Drucker is that **a company's culture will trump any effort by a management team to enforce a strategy that is incompatible with that culture. In the end, it's culture that wins.**

Ensuring that culture is upheld -- its beliefs, behaviors, purpose, and values -- falls squarely on the shoulders of senior leaders as "caretakers of the culture." They champion the company's identity and protect its culture for competitive advantage.

They are also the caretakers of the people that make up the culture -- its employees, who then are held responsible for living out the tenets that hold the culture together.

This is "hire and fire" stuff we're talking about here. It's very-much a part of performance planning and promoting people. But what makes these "caretakers of the culture" stand out?

As you inspect these leaders closer, you can rest assured that certain negative management practices and untrustworthy behaviors by bad bosses will never be displayed. Here's what you will visibly see in action, day in and day out.

1. Caretakers of the culture invite feedback.

It takes humility, an open mind, and a lot of active listening with employees' interests in mind to be open to feedback. As caretakers of the culture, **good leaders will ask peers and respected high-performers the tough question, "How am I doing as a leader?" And then they listen. They are truly interested in receiving honest feedback so they can grow themselves and others.**

2. Caretakers of the culture play for the team.

Leaders that forge ahead with a win-never-at-all-costs agenda at the benefit of some and expense of others will quickly create silos, alienate people, and lose respect of the whole. Caretakers of great company cultures

don't seek the glory or take the credit; they empower their people to do all the work, brainstorm solutions that add value and benefit the whole team, and give them all the glory after a great effort.

3. Caretakers of the culture know it doesn't happen without trust.

Leaders championing a company's culture need to ask a very important question: "Does my behavior increase trust?" If you want to ensure your culture is safe and its common set of values are held tightly without being violated, trust is a non-negotiable pillar that every person -- leaders, employees, and other stakeholders alike -- should stand on.

4. Caretakers of the culture are selfless leaders that serve the culture.

In the newly-released *Servant Leadership in Action: How You Can Achieve Great Relationships and Results*, Raj Sisodia, cofounder of Conscious Capitalism, says this about being a selfless leader:

A leader who operates with a primary emphasis on self-interest naturally views other people as a means to that end. You cannot be a true leader if you operate at that level of consciousness. Selfless does not mean eradicating the ego...it is about harnessing the ego in healthy ways. As the Dalai Lama has said, '[W]e must make sure it is a *serving* ego and not a *deserving* ego.'

5. Caretakers of the culture foster vulnerability across the organization.

In *Servant Leadership in Action*, Simon Sinek, author of three bestselling books, hits the nail on the head about the importance of creating a culture of vulnerability:

Creating a space in which people can feel vulnerable means a person can walk into their boss's office to admit a mistake without fear of losing their job. It means someone can raise their hand and ask for help, admit they have been given a responsibility they don't feel prepared or knowledgeable enough to complete, or admit they are scared without any fear of humiliation or retribution. In contrast, in a work environment that lacks good servant leaders, people will go out of their way to follow the rules at all costs, cover up mistakes, and deny accountability.

6. Caretakers of the culture firmly believe in their people.

In a conversation with *Rolling Stone* magazine in one of the lowest points of his career, Steve Jobs once said: "What's important is that you have a faith in people, that they're basically good and smart, and if you give them tools, they'll do wonderful things with them." As Jobs evolved as a leader, he demonstrated increasing faith in his employees. As caretakers of the culture, you adopt a "trust first" mindset before trust is earned because you accept and believe in your employees' abilities to use their brains and talents to create and innovate.