



A “stop doing” List for Leaders

Managers are regularly encouraged to create a “stop doing” list. The list is a review of all items that have become standard over the years from reports to policies. The question: What isn’t needed or working anymore? Then managers are challenged to stop doing the ineffective or inefficient items.

Let’s ask that question for leaders: What isn’t working anymore?

1. **Stop:** Micro-managing and trying to control every aspect of your job and organization.
Start: Employing the capacities that other group members bring. Coach and support them as you encourage them to try leading and managing, experimenting with their ideas. Let them make and learn from mistakes.
2. **Stop:** Having all the answers – knowing it all.
Start: Asking questions and discovering the strengths of those serving with you. Have strong opinions, weakly held. Create a mutual learning environment where trust is placed in the group’s knowledge and abilities.
3. **Stop:** Enforcing a “no mistakes” policy.
Start: Distinguishing between critical and non-critical errors. Practice being the first to admit a mistake and model how you went about learning from it. Be willing to accept help seeking solutions as well as give it.
4. **Stop:** Believing technical competency is most important.
Start: Seeking to understand the process and research – the why – behind the technical. Use that information to continually refine and alter – to improve – what is being done and how it is being done.
Start: Hiring people who are a good fit with the group as well as for their technical competence.
5. **Stop:** Insisting on changes, persisting with who, what, when, and how you want the changes implemented.
Start: Listening to other members in the group, especially the ones on the front lines. Engage in conversations where people are invited to come up with many ideas. Then give credit where credit is due and nurture change by providing the resources and opportunities to sustain change.

6. **Stop:** Giving “on the spot” awards and incentives. While money is important, and always will be – it alone does not drive employee satisfaction.
Start: Recognizing and appreciating contributions that support the larger purpose of the organization. Highlight stories and examples of group members who have acted in the best interests of the organization and those you serve.
7. **Stop:** Putting off the “dirty work.”
Start: Taking responsibility for holding others accountable for poor performance or treating other team members or those you serve disrespectfully. Act directly and promptly to show others that these won’t be tolerated.
8. **Stop:** Holding grudges.
Start: Sometimes you’ll have to implement bad decisions made by others; do it without continuing the battle – be clear about what will happen, offer understanding, and identify ways of giving control to those affected.

Finally, remember to be grateful. Say “thank you” for the little things as well as the big ones. Celebrate completed projects. Notice and acknowledge difficult, behind-the-scenes, detailed work. Be generous when welcoming new members to the group.

In the end, it’s all about you. Each of us leads from wherever we stand in an organization. Each of us must take responsibility for being an athlete in emotional, social, and political intelligence: self-awareness, other-awareness, and group-awareness.

What’s on your “stop doing” list?

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