

smart supervision™

strategies, ideas and tips for managing yourself and others

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Seven “Old-School” Workplace Strengths That Are Now Weaknesses

by Ed Hess

The times they are a-changing...and so is the nature of our work. And as our familiar world crumbles around us (thanks, COVID-19!) — and technology continues snapping up more and more of the tasks humans have always done — we’ll need a whole new set of skills. If we want to stay employed and viable, we must reinvent ourselves. Leaders. Employees. Everyone.

And it’s not like adding new rooms onto an old house. It’s more like tearing it down to the foundation and rebuilding.

The new world we’re entering has flipped everything upside down. The skills, mindsets and ways of being that were once prized and sought after have actually become liabilities.

We must all be able to continuously learn, unlearn and relearn by adapting to the reality of the world as it evolves. This is not easy, considering our inherent ego-driven need to defend what we think we know. It requires a whole new way of being and a whole new way of working — which, in turn, requires a whole new way of leading.

Here are seven skills and attitudes that not long ago might have gotten you a corner office — but may now get you fired:

Command-and-Control Leadership Style

Expecting people to “follow orders or else” works well when you’re running a factory. In that setting, you expect people to be cogs — to do rather than to think, problem-solve and connect. In the Digital Age, though, you’ll need to lead people whose jobs require innovation, creativity and emotional engagement. You cannot coerce or command people

to do these things. Instead, you must create the conditions that enable them.

Motivation by Fear

In the old command-and-control days (think Industrial Revolution), motivation by fear worked. Fear is an effective motivator when you need people to simply (mindlessly) comply. The problem is, if employees are afraid of negative consequences (from verbal abuse to being fired), they won’t take risks, suggest new ideas, report problems or critique others’ thinking.

“The skills, mindsets and ways of being that were once prized and sought after have actually become liabilities.”

When people are motivated by fear, they won’t bring their best selves to work. They won’t be able to engage in Hyper-Learning. And a company that allows this style of leadership can’t become an “idea meritocracy” where the best data-driven idea or judgment wins, regardless of rank, compensation or power.

Being a Smarty-Pants (All-Knowing)

Pre-Internet, the more you knew, the more valuable you were. In school, the higher your grades and fewer your mistakes, the “smarter” you were. That is old-school “smart,” and it is actually a liability in an age that requires constant learning, unlearning and relearning. You’ll never be able to store in your head as much information as a computer, and you will not have fast, perfect recall like a computer.

Instead, you’ll now be valued for your ability to think differently

(continued on page 2)

from a computer when there is not a lot of data or knowledge. You will have to excel at going into the unknown and figuring stuff out. Leaders and employees alike need to be good at not knowing rather than knowing. That takes humility, which is the opposite of a big ego.

Hard-Driving Type-A Work Style

In less complex times, Type A leaders thrived. Needed results were clear, and leaders could push (themselves and others) until those results were achieved. In a global economy rife with uncertainty and ambiguity — and never has that been more the case than it is right now! — nothing is clear. Rather than driving results, leaders must slow down and foster engagement. It’s the only way people can work together to find solutions. If this is to happen, leaders must exist in a state of inner peace — and help employees do the same.

Focus on Quick Decisions and Efficiency

In the past, when the leader’s today word was law, being able to make decisions quickly and enforce them was a strength. Not anymore. The best leaders, are able to slow down, engage with others, and really listen with a nonjudgmental, open mind. They know that the kinds of high-level conversations that need to happen take time to unfold. Innovation and exploring the new is a process where the answers change as you learn.

“Winner-Takes-All” Mindset

Back when companies were military-style hierarchies, it made sense to compete for the boss’s favor. Leaders often encouraged such internal competition because it drove individuals to compete against each other. It was a survival-of-the-fittest environment, pitting people against each other and believing that would produce the best results. In the Digital Age, work will happen via collaboration in an “idea meritocracy” setting.

High-functioning teams will trump individualism. This means leaders will need to create environments that result in caring, trusting teams where employees are naturally motivated to work together and help each other.

“All-Business” Mentality

Back when employees functioned as human machines, emotions were unnecessary. In fact, they

were liabilities. Employers expected people to leave their humanity (certainly their messy emotions) at the door. Today, the opposite is true. Positive emotions are at the heart of learning, connecting, collaborating and creating. They’re the building blocks of caring, trusting relationships. Great leaders will have to “get” and value the power of emotions. And they’ll need to make a point of showing employees they see and value them as unique human beings.

In the Digital Age, our human uniqueness will be highly dependent on our emotional capabilities and how we manage our emotions. It will not be “all business.” It will be all about people and enabling the highest levels of performance in concert with technology.

Becoming a Hyper-Learner isn’t easy, but it is doable. It’s all about unlearning skills and behaviors that no longer serve us. Actually, many of

these are relics of the Industrial Revolution, so they haven’t served us in a very long time! I think most will agree that creating workplaces where people can thrive, grow and become their best selves is worth the effort. ■



about the author

Edward D. Hess is professor of business administration, Batten Fellow, and Batten Executive-in-Residence at the Darden School of Business and the author of [Hyper-Learning: How to Adapt to the Speed of Change](#).

Hess spent 20 years in the business world as a senior executive and has spent the last 18 years in academia. He is the author of 13 books, over 140 articles and 60 Darden case studies. His work has appeared in over 400 global media outlets including Fortune, European Business Review, HBR, SHRM, Fast Company, WIRED, Forbes, Inc., Huffington Post, Washington Post, Business Week, Financial Times, CNBC Squawk Box, Fox Business News with Maria Bartiroma, Big Think, WSJ Radio, Bloomberg Radio with Kathleen Hays, Dow Jones Radio, MSNBC Radio, Business Insider, and Wharton Radio.

Hess’s recent books and research include Human Excellence in the Digital Age: A New Way of Being; A New Way of Working; Humanizing the Workplace; and Hyper-Learning. ■

Formal vs. Informal Training: Which Is Better?

Question: My department is on a pretty tight budget. So, when it comes to training employees, it seems as if we never have enough money. We might be able to send one or two workers to a seminar or training class and have them report back to everyone, but I can't send the whole department. How can I make informal training work in my department?

Answer: Training is an essential part of keeping your workforce up to date. But does all training have to be in a classroom situation with workbooks, consultants and big price tags? Absolutely not. In fact, informal training may be even more effective than you think.

Here are some ways to make informal training work for you:

- **Don't miss out on opportunities.** One problem with formal training is that it's done at preset times, usually far away from workstations. That's not the ideal way to train workers. Instead, you should seize the many opportunities that present themselves for on-the-job training. This kind of learning sinks in and pays off.
- **Cultivate a learning mind-set.** Create an atmosphere of excitement about work by showing that there is always something to learn because nobody knows it all.
- **Reward knowledge-seekers.** Praise employees who consistently show initiative by going the extra mile to learn more about their jobs. This will boost morale and reinforce the notion that such behavior is valued.
- **Keep yourself informed.** This may be the most important part of an informal learning program. You are the real trainer here, so be aware of what needs to be taught. It will mean putting in a little extra of your own time. But again, it will pay off when you can show your boss that you have saved the cost of formal training.
- **Bring in knowledgeable friends and colleagues.** You probably know someone who has expertise in your field and who can make a presentation to your staff. After clearing this with your boss, you may find that this is an ideal way to get free training for your team. ■



Think Twice Before Making a Counteroffer

Question: I recently overheard some office gossip that one of my best workers is seeking new employment. I really can't afford to lose this worker. Should I make a counteroffer to try to keep this worker?

Answer: It's a tough pill to swallow when one of your most talented employees announces that he or she is going to leave your company. Your gut may tell you to do whatever it takes to get the employee to stay — including throwing money at the situation in the form of a counteroffer. However, before making a counteroffer, it is important to take a few things into consideration.

Why Is the Employee Leaving?

First, keep in mind that the employee may take your counteroffer, but it may only prolong the inevitable. Employees do not typically leave jobs they love and money may not be the reason this employee is unhappy. It is important that you sit down with the employee and find out why he or she is leaving. Perhaps the reason is something you can take measures to change in order to keep the employee.

How Will it Affect the Department?

Another thing to think about is what kind of impact a salary increase would have on the rest of the department. If you make a counteroffer and the employee takes it, what will it mean to the rest of the staff? Can you legitimately pay one staffer more than the others? Could word spread about the employee's salary increase and cause morale problems? Would others threaten to leave in hopes of getting the same counteroffer? Are you prepared for this kind of backlash?

How Important Is the Worker?

You should also think about the employee's value to the organization. Before deciding to make a counteroffer, think about whether the employee's contribution is worth the money. Keep in mind that it could cost you a small fortune to hire a replacement. At the same time, an exiting employee gives you an opportunity to go back to the well and hire someone who may actually work out better.

Don't let pride get in your way. If the employee is worth a counteroffer, make it. But don't make a counteroffer just to avoid the hassle of having to go through the hiring process. ■

Tips to Avoid Termination Confrontation

It may not be easy to fire a worker, but when you break it down into components, it becomes more palatable. Done properly, an exit interview will leave you and the fired worker feeling as if the best was made of a bad situation. Here are some simple keys you should remember if you ever have to fire one of your workers.

Be Firm

There is absolutely no way that this decision is going to be changed and that's what you have to make clear from the beginning. Any hesitancy on your part will just give the worker false hope, which is extremely unfair and will only make your job more difficult. Your job is to tell the worker it's over. Don't try to soften the blow by saying things like, "I wish this didn't have to happen." The worker will only be confused by your mixed signals.

Leave Room for Dignity

Make sure you reassure the worker's sense of self-respect during the exit interview. If you try to just get it over with, without considering the feelings of this person, you may end up with an angry, bitter ex-employee. Think of how you would like to be treated if you were being fired. Would you want every little thing you had ever done wrong thrown in your face? Or would you just want to know the basic reason for the termination? A wise decision would be to give the person the information straight.

Let the Worker Vent

Give the employee plenty of opportunities to communicate. This is his or her last chance, and there may be some issues or concerns the staffer may want you to be aware of. It's better to allow a channel for that now, instead of sending the worker home to stew about it. This doesn't mean you have to give up your own dignity. However, you need to convey a combination of compassion and control over the situation. If the worker says, "I always gave my best to this company and now I'm being treated like dirt," you can say, "I understand how you feel, but I don't think we are treating you that way."

Pave the Way Out

Tim, a supervisor, had to let a poorly performing worker go. He knew that this worker would do well in a different kind of job, in a different industry, and told him so. Then Tim gave the worker a packet of information, which had been prepared with the assistance of the human resources department, on finding a job. It wasn't exactly outplacement — which would have been more expensive — but it made the worker, who knew he had been in the wrong job, feel like he had a future. "One door closes, but another opens," Tim told the worker, who left feeling more positive about his future despite the termination. ■

Help Your Workers Avoid the Procrastination Trap

It seems too easy to get a job done today when you can simply put it off until tomorrow. Sooner or later, however, everyone who procrastinates wishes he or she didn't. Here are some tips to help steer your workers toward success by making sure they don't fall into the procrastination trap. Here are some tips:

- **Be deadline-oriented.** If you demand that a project be finished by a certain time, the worker will be motivated to do it. If he or she has time management problems, don't wait until the last minute to issue a reminder about the deadline. Keep the worker up to date, especially if you see that he or she is procrastinating.
- **Assign work in small portions.** Some workers, when confronted with a project that is large, are unable to break it down themselves. They feel overwhelmed and decide to work on other things instead. You can help by assigning work in manageable chunks.
- **Give your workers adequate time to complete tasks.** It's good to try and get your employees to avoid procrastination. But if you pile them up with so much work they don't know what to do first, their problem isn't procrastination, it's lack of time. Don't create problems for yourself. Consider what needs to be done and emphasize certain priorities if necessary. ■

Turn Employees into Leaders

There's a reason for the phrase "natural-born leader." Many people in leadership positions possess certain traits that can't be learned or taught. However, with a bit of help from you, some employees may grow and develop into leaders. Here are a few things you can do:

- ✓ **Set goals for your employees.** Give them direction, but give them an opportunity to take the reins and achieve the goals their way. In other words, give them a chance to demonstrate their skills and desire.
- ✓ **Give your employees your time.** Share your wisdom and experience with your staff. Set an example for them; be a role model. Also, share with potential stand-outs what you have found to be the most important traits of a leader.
- ✓ **Don't be afraid.** Some supervisors are afraid to give an employee too much responsibility or too many opportunities to shine. They worry that the employee will outshine them. Remember that developing great employees is a mark of a good supervisor. Outstanding employees only make you look good. ■

Boost Your Leadership Ability With These Steps

Every team needs a strong leader to motivate its members. As a supervisor, it's not always easy to be that leader. You want your employees to be autonomous and confident in their abilities, but you also want them to benefit from your experience and know-how.

Here are some ideas to improve your leadership skills:

- 1. Don't be a know-it-all.** It's expected that you will be more knowledgeable than most of your employees about many issues. After all, you're the supervisor. But that doesn't mean you should relate to your workers with an "I'm always right" attitude. The supervisor who shows a willingness to learn is the supervisor who commands the respect of subordinates.
- 2. Pay more attention to people than to numbers.** Too many supervisors look only at the production numbers and not at the people who are producing those numbers. Quality is an essential part of profitability; without it, the company won't prosper and grow.
- 3. Work one-on-one.** Some supervisors assume that the best way to be a leader is to talk to workers in a group. Yet working with people one-on-one gives the supervisor a chance to learn from them, and it gives the workers a chance to ask questions that they might not feel comfortable asking in a group situation.
- 4. Ask questions.** Sometimes, a supervisor does not know as much about a process or technique as one of the operators does. Go ahead and ask the operator. The worker will be pleased to be asked and will reward you with extra respect.
- 5. Be a persuader.** Remember that real leadership is accomplished by persuading your workers to follow you. To do this, you need to talk to them, listen to them and coach them. If you try to force people to follow you, they will, but the end result will suffer because workers will be resentful. If you make people want to follow you, then your leadership will result in a better work product and higher productivity.



- 6. Learn how to run a meeting.** Running a successful meeting involves organizing your thoughts ahead of time and knowing what your goals are for the meeting. Not everyone is born with these skills, but it's essential that you acquire them if you're going to command respect from your group.
- 7. Know your team.** Finally, you can't be a good leader if you don't know the people you're trying to lead. This is why it takes some time to develop a leadership relationship with workers. A new supervisor can't be expected to walk in and be a good leader the first day. Get to know your workers. ■

Beware of Being Too Secretive or Telling All

The supervisor or manager who withholds information from subordinates often thinks this gives him or her more power. However, the people who work for this type of boss don't see it the same way. Most workers think that not having a view of the whole picture of the operation cripples them and keeps them from being successful.

Certainly, it's true that there is some proprietary information that can't be shared with your staff. The case of an upcoming merger or change in company policy might have to be divulged on a need-to-know basis.

In most other cases, it's vital to the effectiveness of the staff that they know what your actual goals are. They can't work effectively toward goals without knowing what those goals are.

Some studies show that tight-mouthed bosses are also less likely to give credit where credit is due. That's a downer for any worker.

The opposite of the secretive boss is the one who talks way too much. If he or she is very competitive, this boss could be tempted to divulge information about a person that was shared in confidence.

Talkative bosses might gossip about other bosses and complain about directives they've been given. They might also reveal their own personal or career problems. After that, workers begin to think of the boss as a friend rather than the person who is in charge. They may begin to question the boss's decisions or imitate his or her gossipy manner. ■

Do You Have Bullies on Your Staff?

When it Comes to Bullying, Zero Tolerance Is the Best Policy

Every playground seems to have at least one bully. It's the kid who teases and taunts classmates, skewering them with a barrage of verbal spears. In some cases, the bullying gets physical and can involve pushing, shoving and other forms of harassment. A growing problem in this country is the fact that many of these bullies never seem to grow out of their need to mistreat and degrade others. The result? A growing epidemic of workplace bullying, often bad enough to cause its victims to quit their jobs and/or relocate.

Workplace bullying is difficult to define, as it can take many forms. Generally, it is the tendency of individuals or groups to use persistent, aggressive or unreasonable behavior against a co-worker. Like schoolyard bullying, it can involve verbal threats and taunts, nonverbal gestures and behaviors, and even physical abuse. Bullying goes beyond being rude. It can involve name-calling, cursing, ostracism, destruction of property or sabotaging work product.

Emotional abuse like this often rises to the level of harassment — a form of unlawful discrimination. Being hostile, either physically or verbally, to another person based on his or her age, sex, race, color, religion, national origin, disability or any other legally protected trait is against the law and must not be tolerated in the workplace. Keep in mind, too, that many states and municipalities have extended the list of protected classes to include things like sexual orientation, gender identity and marital status.

According to a study by the [Workplace Bullying Institute \(WBI\)](#), both men and women bully, but women are the primary targets. Female bullies choose female targets 87% of the time. Male bullies choose female targets 71% of the time. About 50% of all workplace bullying is woman-on-woman. Man-on-man bullying represents about 30% of the total. Most of the time, then, bullying is considered same-sex harassment, something that is not protected by U.S. civil rights laws unless there are unwanted sexual overtones involved.

To make matters worse, the WBI study shows that the phenomenon of bullying begins with a single person who then orchestrates a campaign of hate with the help of allies. According to the WBI, about 77% of bullies enlist the help of others when targeting their victim.

Why Are People Bullied?

The WBI study examined why victims thought they were selected by bullies as targets. The most common responses included:

- **I remained independent, refused to be controlled or to be subservient.** (70%)
- **My competence and reputation were threatening.** (67%)
- **The bully's personality.** (59%)
- **My being liked by co-workers and customers.** (47%)
- **In retaliation for reporting unethical or illegal conduct; whistleblowing.** (38%)
- **I was focused solely on work and ignored the politics.** (36%)
- **Bully had personal problems.** (35%)
- **I am nonconfrontive [sic] and easily overrun by others.** (33%)
- **It was at a time of personal, medical or life vulnerability or changes.** (30%)
- **I could not afford to leave the job and the bully knew it.** (30%)

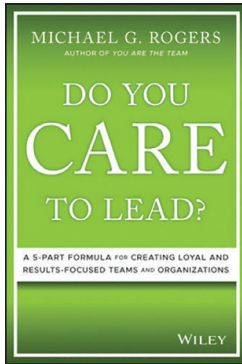
“Workplace bullying is difficult to define, as it can take many forms. Generally, it is the tendency of individuals or groups to use persistent, aggressive or unreasonable behavior against a co-worker.”

The study showed that targets principally blame the harasser and the work environment for the bullying. They see that the bully controls the onset, manner and duration of the bullying. However, it takes a bullying-tolerant or bullying-rewarding environment to sustain the mistreatment.

While the majority of respondents (61%) said they were victims of current, ongoing bullying, some reported an end to the bullying. Unfortunately, the price of putting a stop to the bullying was often the involuntary termination of the victim or the victim quitting (often taking some form of constructive discharge). What this means, according to WBI, is that, once targeted, bullied individuals face a 70% chance of losing their jobs.

Put a Stop to Workplace Bullying Now

Now is the time to examine the relationships among your employees and perhaps your own relationship with your staff. If you receive complaints of harassment or bullying behavior, nip it in the bud. Action must be taken immediately to prevent plunging morale and even the loss of a valued employee. Failing to take harassment complaints seriously can also land you in court. Disgruntled employees who are forced to put up with bullying behavior may eventually leave the workplace. However, they may ultimately strike back in the form of a lawsuit. ■



Do You Care to Lead?: A 5-Part Formula for Creating Loyal and Results-Focused Teams and Organizations

Think of a world where people go to work completely engaged, are inspired to do more than they ever thought possible, remain 100% loyal to the teams and organizations they belong to, are achieving mind-blowing results, and gladly and even

passionately follow their leader's direction. Is that a world you want to be a part of? The reality is you really can! However, it's not the world most people and leaders currently live in.

When employees were asked in a Gallup poll whether their supervisor or anyone else at work cared about them, only 4 out of 10 strongly agreed with that statement. That is a startling number. We have a lot of work to do. Old leadership practices don't work anymore.

In his work with hundreds of leaders and teams, Michael Rogers has created a practical approach to leadership that works. It is the Care to Lead Leader™. Care to Lead Leaders are different than most leaders. Most leaders talk of caring with their lips but are far from actually leading with their hearts.

Care to Lead Leaders lead from their heart. They understand that leading from the heart wins the hearts of those they lead, which makes leading more purposeful and a lot easier.

Through Michael's five-part SONIC leadership formula, you will become a Care to Lead Leader. You will discover:

- One simple Care to Lead Leader practice that can literally revolutionize the culture of your teams and/or organizations
- How to build real trust on your teams and/or organizations and explode creativity and the volume of ideas
- How to have more courage and second guess yourself less
- Practical tips on skyrocketing individual performance
- The secret to creating the most loyal followers on the planet
- How to take your teams and/or organizations to unprecedented levels of achievement and results

In his book, *Do You Care To Lead?*, Rogers illustrates his ideas and concepts through introspective questions and inspiring stories that keep you engaged and have you regularly looking at your own leadership and asking: Am I the kind of leader people really want to follow?

After reading this book, you'll have the tools to apply practical servant leadership approaches that create buy-in into bigger visions, improve loyalty and engagement, and move your teams and organizations to unprecedented levels of action. ■

How to Make Every Employee Extraordinary

Improved self-esteem is a benefit to the individual as well as to the company. It's also a very cost-effective way to improve productivity. Here are some tips for how to motivate the average worker:

- **Choose strong points and stress them.** Even the average worker has a few things that he or she does especially well. Focus on these strong points in your interactions with the employee.
- **Address weak points with an encouraging demeanor.** Pick some areas the employee needs to work on and talk to him or her about them. Make sure you do this in a positive way so that the individual will feel motivated to concentrate on those points. You want to encourage the worker to try harder.
- **Create a professional atmosphere.** If workers are coasting or not trying their best, it's often

because they feel that what they do doesn't really matter. If you can generate an overall atmosphere of professionalism, in which everyone is always working at his or her top capacity, you will have created a built-in goal-setting mechanism. ■



Essential Safety Questions for Supervisors

Taking the time to review possible workplace hazards can mean the difference between having a worker out with a job-related injury or having a perfect safety record — something to which every supervisor should aspire. If you want to do a quick check to review working conditions, ask yourself the following questions:

- Are there materials on the floor that could cause a slip, trip or fall?
- Is lighting adequate?
- Are there electrical hazards at the job site?
- Are there any chemical, physical, biological or radiation hazards associated with the job?
- Are tools — including hand tools, machines and equipment — in need of repair?
- Is there excessive noise in the work area that hinders worker communication or may cause hearing loss?
- Are job procedures known and are they followed or modified?
- Are trucks or motorized vehicles properly equipped with brakes, overhead guards, backup signals, steering gears and identification, as necessary?
- Are employees who operate vehicles and equipment properly trained and authorized?
- Are employees wearing proper personal protective equipment for the jobs they are performing?
- Is ventilation adequate, especially in confined or enclosed spaces?
- Are employees trained in the event of a fire, explosion or toxic gas release?

Not all of the points will apply to your workplace, but some most certainly will. Taking the time to review them will help ensure that you are in compliance with important safety laws and regulations, as well as improve the overall well-being and morale of your employees. ■

Positive or Negative Reinforcement: Take this Quiz to Measure the Situation

Sometimes employees need a little prodding to reach their peak performance. But it can be hard to tell whether the best kind of prodding comes via positive or negative reinforcement. Supervisors have to know what stance to take, depending on the circumstances and the individual involved.

Here are some questions you may want to ask yourself when determining whether rewards or punishments will work best to motivate your workers:

- Is the worker aware of a problem?**
Some employees may think that they are doing a great job. These workers may be unaware of any shortcomings. If this is the case, you have to make the worker aware of the issue by letting them know exactly what it is they are doing wrong. Then wait and see if the problem corrects itself.
- Is the employee capable, but lazy?**
This kind of worker is not likely to appreciate any kind of punishment. Being smart enough to know better, the worker is basically hoping to get away with doing less than he or she is capable of. This laziness is a common trait in highly skilled people who do not have enough of a challenge in their jobs. Offer this worker a reward for doing more. The kind of incentive that will work best is one that presents the worker with an extra, non-routine task.
- Is termination the last straw?**
Every employee who receives warnings about his or her work knows that the end of this process is termination. You don't want to wave this threat in the worker's face as that would be demoralizing and counterproductive. However, there may be an employee who will not respond to anything but discipline. Begin with a verbal warning. Let the employee know that if his or her performance doesn't improve within a set period of time, you will have another, more serious, discussion. The second warning should be in writing. If the employee has still not improved after the second meeting, it's time to say, "This is your last chance." If the employee still doesn't respond with adequate improvement, termination is the only reasonable solution. ■

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