



Don't Forget How You Got There

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If you've attained a significant position of responsibility you've undoubtedly performed well in many ways. You've worked long hours and kept going when others would have given up. You've made decisions, put yourself at risk, and taken actions that few others had the courage to take. You pursued goals that others thought were foolish and made many mistakes along the way. These and other aspects of what you did are now a source of great pride. Be careful though. Never forget that your success wasn't just your own. There were many others who contributed and helped along the way.

Studies find that people in senior positions develop "foggy memory." They forget how they got there. The accouterments of success such as the corner office, first-class travel, media spotlight, and doting assistants cause people to think they're better than others. Some start to think their organization's policies, if not the law, no longer apply to them. They become entitled and even abusive. They think they are smarter and more deserving than others. They conveniently forget the contributions made by those who helped them get there. To return the favor, their followers abandon their loyalty and quit giving their best.

Don't let your success go to your head. To ensure you don't develop foggy memory and abuse your authority, follow these six principles:

- 1. Reflect on and remember the contributions of others.** Don't forget the great ideas provided to you by others. Don't forget the hard work of the people on your team—both your employees and those from other organizations. Don't forget the individuals who made up for your shortcomings. Don't think "I" when in reality it was "we." Achievements are always a team effort. Be proud of your team, not merely yourself.
- 2. Ground your confidence in humility, not hubris.** There is a fine line between maintaining a healthy self-esteem and thinking more of yourself than you should. Be confident in your unique blend of genetics, knowledge, experience, education, and capabilities, not the thought that you are better than others. You are wonderfully different, not better.
- 3. Be open to feedback, correction, learning, and improving.** The day you think all is well or you know it all is the day you stop learning and start declining. Allow others to teach you. Others have information, experiences, skills, and insights that you don't. Ask questions and listen. Ask others for their opinions before making decisions. Ask others for their feedback about how you are doing.
- 4. Treat your followers with respect.** If it weren't for followers, you wouldn't be a leader. If people didn't work for you, buy your offerings, or follow your advice, you wouldn't be a leader. Appreciate that you are a leader for one reason—you have followers. Turn your organization chart upside down. Put your employees and constituents at the top. Ensure the energy in your organization flows toward them, not you.
- 5. Give praise and encouragement.** Don't take your followers for granted. Give them credit for their effort as well as their results. Recognize their positive attitude and behaviors. Publicly reinforce the values, passions, approaches, and loyalty that you appreciate. Make a daily habit of thanking people for their contributions and showing your appreciation.
- 6. Leverage your ability, not your position.** You may have command over people due to your control over their compensation, employment, resources, and approvals, but don't rely on your power of position. The power that comes from authority is not your most effective source of power. People don't give their best because they have to or are told to. People give their best when they want to. People give their best when you set a positive example, nurture them through coaching, enable them through resources, and encourage them through praise and inspiration.

Follow these six principles to ensure you remember how you achieved your success and continue to sustain the loyalty of your followers.



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