

Mistakes Managers Make Managing Data Scientists that You want to Identify and Prevent

James R. Johnson, PhD (Jim)
Cary, NC USA

*EU PhUSE Connect – Amsterdam
November 2019*

Paper PM06

Background, Statement of the Problem

- Managers are people with all of the feelings, emotions, and human issues evident in every staff member.
- Management skills are not innate traits in most humans and many managers lack the fundamental skills, including the soft skills, and training essential for effectively leading a team of data scientists.
- Many managers also lack sensitivity, awareness, and the core values essential for effective interaction with people.
- Management skills and techniques are easier to teach; Values, Beliefs, Attitude, and Humility are much harder to teach, and significantly more difficult for managers to learn.
- Managers make fundamental mistakes because they are Human and fail to recognize they are making the same mistake over and over again!

Wisdom from My Maternal Grandmother (Dollie Green, 1893-1990)

“God gave you 2 eyes, 2 ears, and one mouth. You need to use them in proportion to each other”

Translation.....

If your Mouth is Open your ears are closed and eyes are shut!

We talk to much. We Do Not Listen enough, and We do No observe enough.

Fundamental Management Requirement is to listen and observe more, and talk less.

Consideration

- False assumption:
 - Managers and Leaders are the same thing.
- Consider :
 - Every “leader” may not be a good manager, but every “manager” must be a good leader.
 - Any manager who lacks effective leadership skills will drive a data sciences team into chaos faster than you can blink an eye.

Responsibility, Accountability, Authority Paradigm

Every task, or project, that a data scientist or data sciences team tackles comes with equal levels of “Responsibility”, Accountability” and “Authority”.

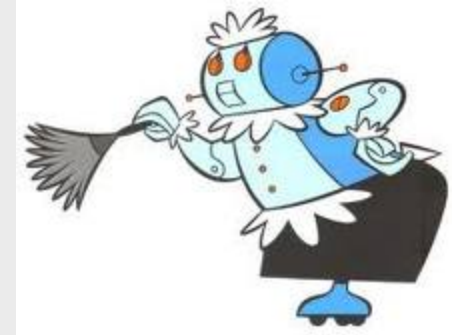
When this three sided triangle no longer has equal sides (ergo: unequal levels of responsibility, accountability, or authority) then mistakes have occurred, processes have suffered, projects get delayed, and staff generally are unhappy.

More often than Not unequal levels are the result of a mistake that a Manager has made!

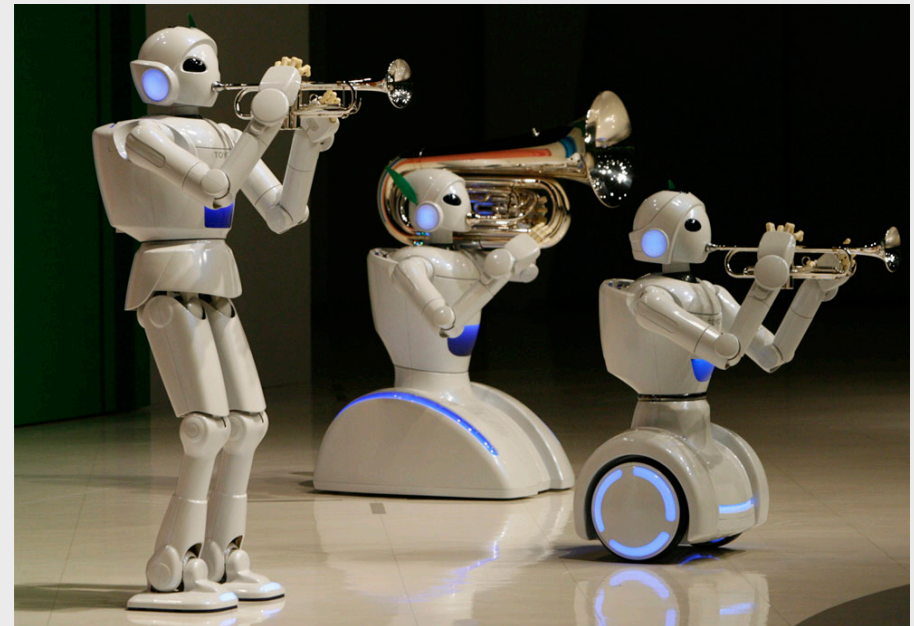


Mistake # 1: Treating staff as robots, not as people

Managers fail to get to know staff as people: people with a work and home life, people with all the human issues that the manager also experiences.



Developing a collegial relationship with reporting staff is a critical factor in managing effectively.

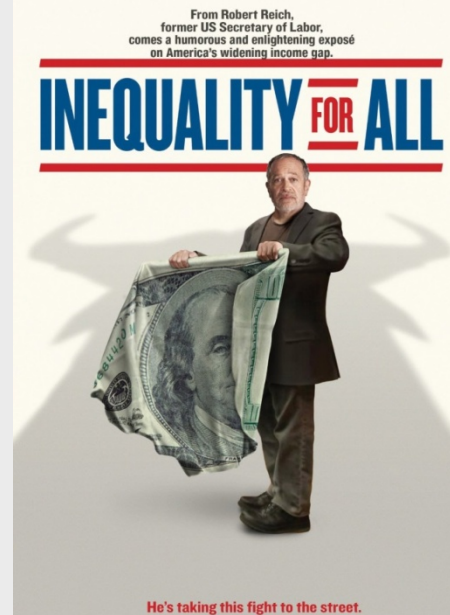


Mistake # 2: Inequality in Treatment of Staff

You don't necessarily have to treat every employee the same, but they must feel as if they receive equal treatment.

If you as a manager have an “inner circle” of employees then you have made a fundamental relationship mistake as a Manager/Leader.

Employees who are not in your inner circle will always believe that you favor the employees who are — whether you do or not. This perception destroys teamwork and undermines productivity and success.



Mistake # 3: Clear Direction

Failure to provide clear direction and clear priorities.

If every task is “High Priority” then staff will believe that there are no priorities, and feel (and behave) rudderless!



Mistake # 4: Trust

All managers should start out with all employees from a position of trust. This shouldn't change until the employee proves themselves unworthy of that trust.

Managers don't trust people to do their jobs, then the equilateral triangle of accountability, responsibility, and authority will most definitely be out of balance.

Managers must understand that trust works two ways: staff must trust their manager, and the manager must develop trust in the staff.

Stop Micromanaging your staff and build Trust!

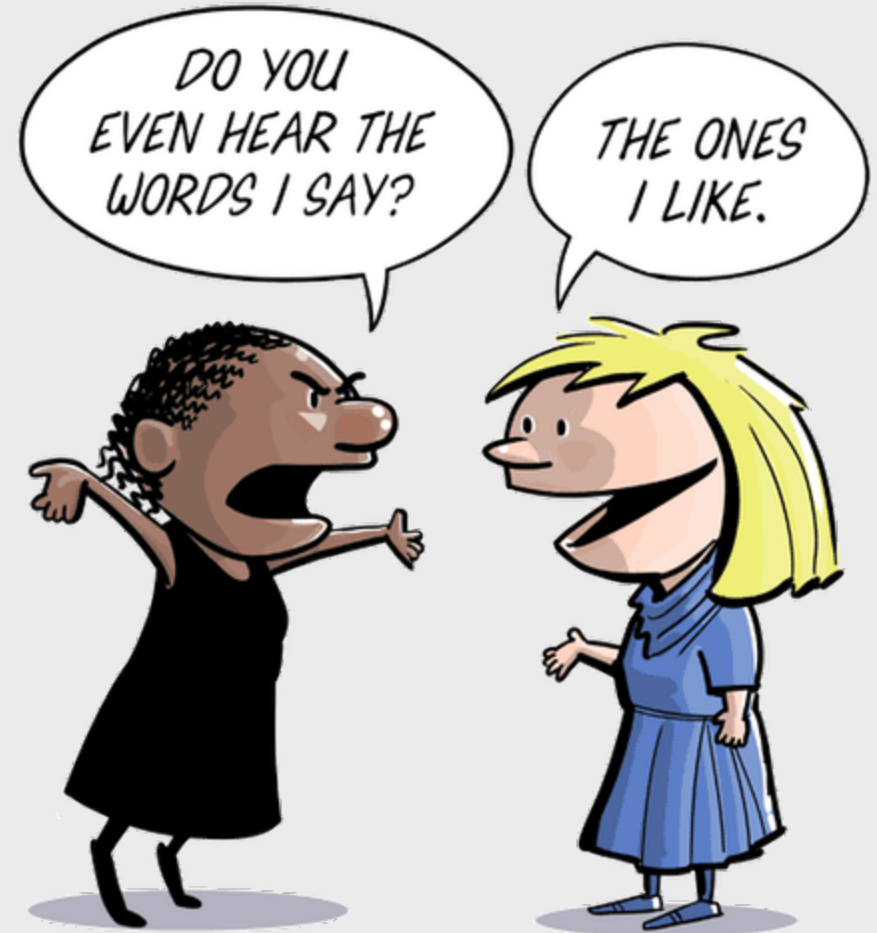


Mistake # 5: Listening

Fail to listen to and help employees feel that their opinions are valued.

Listening is providing recognition and demonstrating your values in action. When employees feel heard out and listened to, they feel important and respected. You will have much more information that you need when you daily open the floodgates.

Remember my Grandmother “God gave us two Ears, Two Eyes, and One Mouth” --
- We must use them in proportion!” Stop Talking!



Mistake # 6: Decision Making

Manager who make decisions and then ask staff for their input, after the fact, have created a situation that clearly demonstrates they do not value input and feedback

This behavior leads to staff non-engagement!

Your best employees soon become very wise to your lack of respect and drop out.

Good luck getting those employees to engage again in any decision making requiring the collective wisdom of the team.



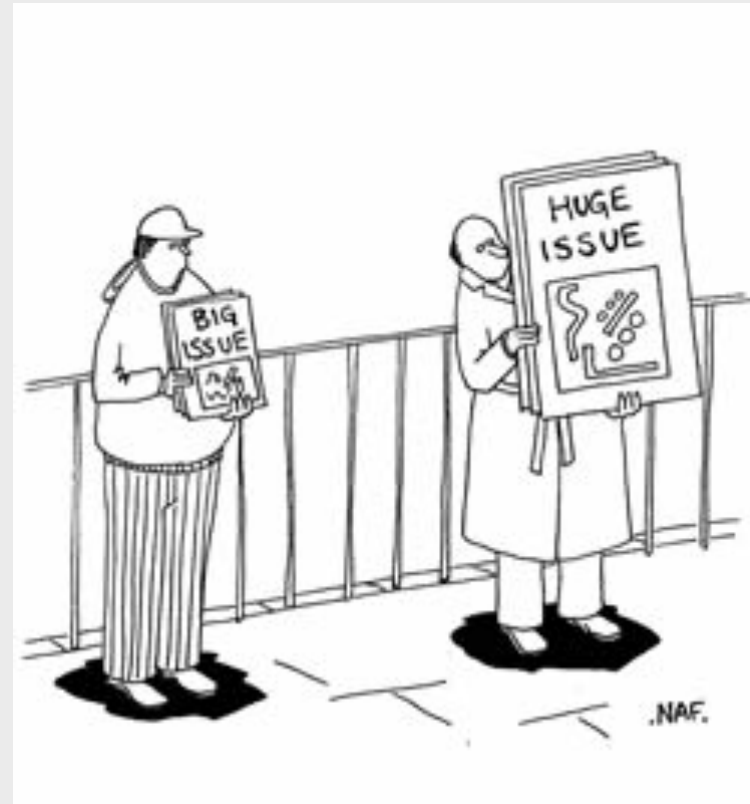
Mistake # 7: Reaction to Problems and Issues

Fail to react to problems and issues that will soon fester if ignored.

Managers have a habit of hoping that an uncomfortable issue, employee conflict or a disagreement will just go away on its own if they don't provoke it or try to resolve it.

Trust me: These problems do not go away on their own!

Proactive intervention from the manager to coach, mentor, listen, or to make sure employees have the skills necessary to resolve the issue, is imperative.



Mistake # 8: Communicate Effectively

- Fail to communicate effectively.
- The best communication is transparent communication.
- If you as the manager hide or withhold important information you will lose both the trust and respect of your staff
- It is OK to tell staff you do not know or that you are unable to share information. Be Transparent!



Mistake # 9: Team

- Data Sciences teams work together, train together, and succeed or fail together.
- There is a powerful and productive force in a team.
- The biggest mistake (Always fatal) is to throw an employee or team “under the bus” when mistakes are made or something goes wrong.
- A leader must recognize that when things go wrong (or mistakes made), and eventually something will go wrong, the leader must remember that “poop” does not roll down hill and must stop with the leader.



Mistake # 9: Team

- A leader must recognize:
- When things go wrong (or mistakes made), the leader must remember that “poop” does not roll down hill and must stop with the leader.
 - The Leader/Manager owns the mistake for the team
- When things go Right, Projects are delivered, quality is high then the Leader/Manager gives the praise/credit to the team and never takes the credit.



Mistake # 10: Catch All – Mistakes you do not know you are making

- Making the move to a manager/leader isn't just a single step on a career path for some people, for many it's a giant leap off a cliff and into the abyss.
- Managers must lead from the front and:
 - Act as a team player
 - Be Flexibility
 - Provide Clear Effective communication
 - Problem-solving and resourcefulness
 - Accept feedback (and learning from that feedback)
 - Demonstrate Confidence
 - Use Creative thinking, Encourage Creative Thinking in Staff
 - Demonstrate Humility

Conclusion

- When a staff member resigns from a data sciences organization, one of the top reasons for resigning is their relationship with their manager.
- Over 50% of the time staff leave a job because of a poor Manager.



Conclusion

- The “Good Manager” will:
 - Value people,
 - Believe in two-way, frequent, open, effective communication,
 - Practice active listening,
 - Want to create an environment where staff are empowered to take charge of their responsibilities,
 - Able to provide appropriate levels of authority, hold people accountable and responsible without using punitive measures,
 - Demonstrate leadership with clear goals and direction,
 - Believe in, demonstrate, and value teamwork,
 - Customer focused: Place the customer at the center of their reason for existence and regard reporting data sciences staff as their main customers

- The “**Great Manager**” will:
 - Do all of the things well that a “Good Manager” does and will also live by the following:
 - “It is Always Better to Praise a Team Member in Public, and criticize in Private”.
- Building respect, trust, and loyalty in a team or team member starts with Respect and Trust, and a great deal of humility



ATTITUDE

THE LONGER I LIVE, THE MORE I REALIZE
THE IMPACT OF ATTITUDE ON LIFE.

ATTITUDE, TO ME, IS MORE IMPORTANT
THAN FACTS. IT IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN
THE PAST, THAN EDUCATION, THAN MONEY,
THAN CIRCUMSTANCES, THAN FAILURES,
THAN SUCCESSES, THAN WHAT OTHER PEOPLE
THINK, SAY OR DO. IT IS MORE IMPORTANT
THAN APPEARANCE, GIFTEDNESS OR SKILL.

IT WILL MAKE OR BREAK A
COMPANY... A CHURCH... A HOME.

THE REMARKABLE THING IS WE HAVE A
CHOICE EVERY DAY REGARDING THE
ATTITUDE WE EMBRACE FOR THAT DAY.

WE CANNOT CHANGE OUR PAST...
WE CANNOT CHANGE THE FACT THAT PEOPLE
WILL ACT IN A CERTAIN WAY.

WE CANNOT CHANGE THE INEVITABLE.
THE ONLY THING WE CAN DO IS PLAY THE
ONE STRING WE HAVE, AND THAT IS OUR
ATTITUDE... I AM CONVINCED THAT
LIFE IS 10% WHAT HAPPENS TO ME AND 90%
HOW I REACT TO IT. AND SO IT IS WITH YOU...
WE ARE IN CHARGE OF OUR ATTITUDES.

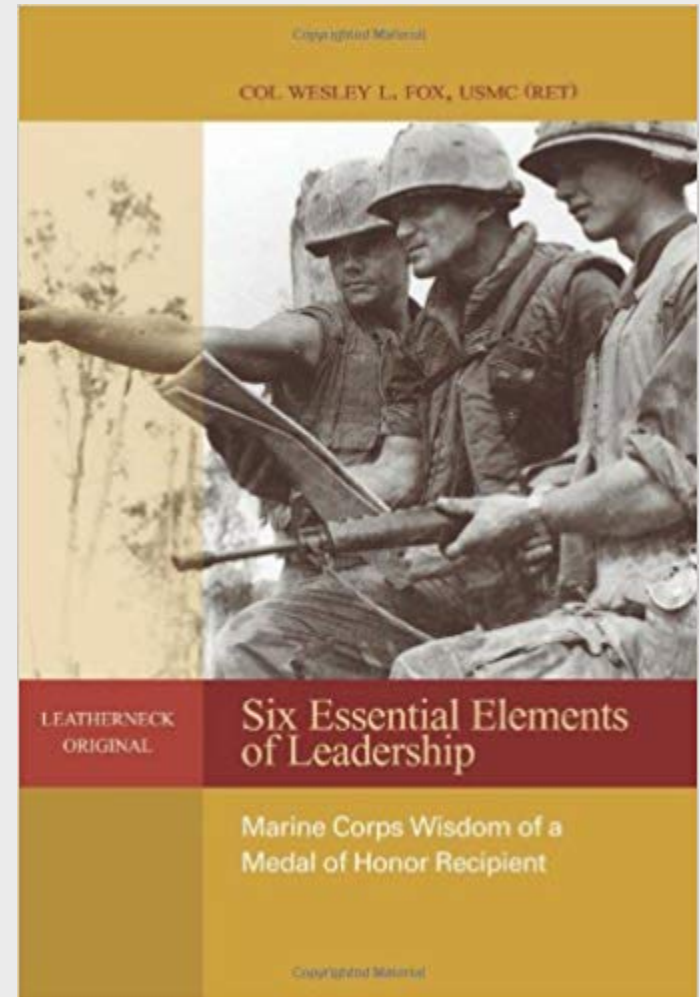
Charles Swindoll

Recommended Reading for All Managers/Leaders

Leadership has a strong focus on the strengths of teamwork and its core importance to all individuals and organizations.

Leaders are concerned with their followers, their health, happiness, and daily lives.

The Fundamental Marine Corps Principle taught at the Basic Course for all officers is to lead their Marines as a team and build up and support each and every Marine!



QUESTIONS

