



9 Ways Your Leaders May Be

Accidentally Diminishing Others

And What They Should Do Instead

FranklinCovey



Are your leaders inadvertently shutting people down?

In the research for her bestselling book, *Multipliers: How the Best Leaders Make Everyone Smarter*, Liz Wiseman identified the nine most common Accidental Diminisher tendencies. These behaviors are often associated with being a strong individual performer or even a strong leader, but when overused or misapplied, they can shut down a team's intelligence and contributions.

LIZ WISEMAN'S

MULTIPLIERS[®]

HOW THE BEST LEADERS IGNITE EVERYONE'S INTELLIGENCE



An Overplayed Strength Can Be a Leader's Greatest Weakness.

As you read this guide, remember: Once leaders are aware of their diminishing tendencies, if they keep behaving the same way, those behaviors will no longer be accidental.

“Leading with intention starts with understanding how our natural tendencies can take us down the wrong path—how seemingly strong leadership traits can go awry and become our vulnerability.”

— Liz Wiseman



You can use the tips in this guide to help leaders at all levels start making the transition to Multiplier behaviors. The best practices presented here are a small part of FranklinCovey's new [Multipliers](#) work session, which is designed to help leaders get more value from every team member.

9 types of Accidental Diminisher:

1. Idea Fountain
2. Always On Rescuer
3. Pacesetter
4. Rapid Responder
5. Optimist
6. Protector
7. Strategist
8. Perfectionist

1. Idea Fountain

Perhaps you know some creative leaders bubbling with “Imagine if we ...” or “Maybe we should ...” ideas, which they share freely, hoping to spark others’ thinking.

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But this fountain of ideas can feel like a deluge to others, conditioning team members to sit back and leave the creative stuff to the “idea person” (their boss).

It can cause people to chase after their leader’s ideas trying to implement them — only to have the next idea hit them before they’ve had a chance to absorb the first one, let alone act on it. Continue this pattern long enough, and people grow cynical, thinking, These ideas never amount to anything, so why bother trying to act on them?

To help leaders start shifting to Multiplier behaviors, have them try this tip:

- **Regularly solicit ideas from your team — before you share your own.** When your direct reports have to say their piece first, they can’t just go along with whatever the boss says.

Try idea-generating questions, like:

What’s a way that would allow us to deliver greater value to clients?

What’s the biggest opportunity you think we’re missing out on?

Then, listen closely to their answers and ask follow-up questions.

2. Always On

Many leaders bring high energy and enthusiasm to their work, believing it will inspire their team — emotions can be infectious, after all.



Instead of filling silence, leaders should wait five seconds for an answer after asking a question.

But when leaders have a big personality or just do a lot of the talking, they can easily overwhelm others to the point that team members mentally turn them “off.”

In reality, energizing people isn’t about your leaders filling up the room with their energy and words — it’s about making space for others to share theirs.

To help leaders start shifting to Multiplier behaviors, have them try this tip:

Talk less, listen more. Try shifting your focus from broadcasting your views to helping others articulate their perspectives and good ideas. Your best friend in this endeavor? The question. Challenge yourself to start off interactions with questions instead of statements.

Or, if you find yourself talking too much, say:

I know I can take up a lot of space in conversations. What would you add that I’m not seeing here?

Then, listen — which means waiting patiently for their response, focusing on their words, asking thoughtful follow-up questions, and much more.



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The most effective leaders know that energizing people isn't about filling up the room with their energy and words—it's about making space for others to share theirs.”

3. Rescuer

Some leaders want to provide help and support to ensure people are successful and protect their reputations.



Rescuing is the most common Accidental Diminisher tendency—and one of the most challenging to overcome.

But when they habitually act as a safety net, so their direct reports never make mistakes, such leaders inadvertently rob team members of opportunities to build their problem-solving skills—and the pride that comes from true ownership of their work.

The only skill people will learn in being rescued is dependency, which means more work for the Rescuer. According to Multipliers research, rescuing is one of the most common Accidental Diminisher tendencies. It's also one of the most challenging to overcome.

Sometimes direct reports ask for help because it feels safer for their boss to take over than for them to risk messing up.

To help leaders start shifting to Multiplier behaviors, have them try this tip:

- Short circuit your desire to step in by posing a question instead.

For example, you might say:

I want to help, but maybe you don't need me to step in. What would be most helpful to you right now?

Or, if the person comes to you with a problem or asks for help, instead of providing an answer, start by asking:

How do you think we should solve this?

4. Pacesetter

You may know leaders who want to “show them how it’s done.” These leaders speed ahead to set a high standard for quality or pace of work, hoping their team members will notice, join in, and keep up.



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But if a leader is consistently out front, introducing new processes and techniques or completing work first in an attempt to lead by example, often the opposite happens: People slow down or give up and become spectators. They figure it’s their manager’s job to lead the way, and that it’s pointless to hustle since they can’t match their boss anyway.

To help leaders start shifting to Multiplier behaviors, have them try these tips:

- **Regularly ask your team questions like:**

What could we be doing better?

What have you learned?

When you foster a team culture where everyone is expected to learn and find better ways of doing things, then you won’t be the one developing all the insights and new techniques to propel your team forward. Your direct reports will be doing it—and sharing information to raise the collective intelligence of the group.

- **Delegate something from your to-do list:** It’s a common leadership pitfall: Keeping too much individual work for yourself. It’s understandable. You’re great at that work (it may even be why you got promoted), and you enjoy it, whereas managerial work—all those meetings and messy conversations!—might feel less satisfying. But your job is to lead others in doing the work, not to do it all yourself. Review your to-do list this week: What’s a task that a direct report would be good at or interested in as an opportunity to grow? Reassign it.



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When you have a culture where everyone is expected to find better ways of doing things, a few people don't have to develop all the insights.”

5. Rapid Responder

Some leaders want to keep things moving fast — and so they're quick to troubleshoot problems, make small decisions, and hit reply to show that they're “on top of it.”



When a manager trains people not to respond to questions about their work, they wonder why their boss doesn't trust them.

But by jumping in to do these little tasks for projects their team members are working on, these leaders rob them of the chance to show that they are just as (or even more!) capable. Such managers train their direct reports not to respond — why should they bother when they know their boss will? — and leave them wondering why the boss doesn't trust them to handle inquiries about their work.

And these Rapid Responders unwittingly train colleagues to funnel every question and request through them. Meanwhile, the leader's inbox keeps expanding, making them a bottleneck rather than the speedster they aspire to be.

To help leaders start shifting to Multiplier behaviors, have them try this tip:

- **Make it clear to your direct reports when they should respond first — then let them.** Your team will begin to respond proactively only if you tell them you want them to.

For example, you might say:

I know in the past I've been quick to jump in to answer questions and requests, but for this project, I'd like you to be the one responding.

Emphasize that you're happy to give your input if they ask for it, but otherwise, you won't weigh in. For a boost of confidence, you could add:

I trust you to make these decisions.

Then, route requests that come your way to your direct report.

6. Optimist

You likely know leaders full of can-do attitude and confidence that their team members are smart and will figure it all out. What could possibly be wrong with that?



Sometimes a relentlessly upbeat attitude prevents a leader from showing empathy.

Optimism can be an excellent trait. But when leaders are optimistic to the point that they downplay challenges or gloss over the struggle of others who are doing hard work, people may think their boss is clueless or just doesn't care. Or worse, that something's wrong with them if they find a task difficult or make a mistake—because the boss said, "That shouldn't be too hard."

To help leaders start shifting to Multiplier behaviors, have them try this tip:

- **Instead of starting with your optimism, start by expressing interest in how the other person feels about a situation.** Inquiring, in a neutral way, creates space for them to explain how they honestly feel.

For example:

How are you feeling about this new assignment?

What challenges do you see that I might be missing?

Plus, this approach positions you to respond accordingly. Maybe they need you to hear and acknowledge their concerns. Maybe they need more context from you in order to see the exciting possibilities. Or, maybe they're just as optimistic as you are and can be a more effective cheerleader for the team.



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7. Protector

Some well-meaning leaders want to keep people safe from unpleasant work realities — including difficult people, politics, or the uncertainty of decisions still in flux.



Are your leaders shielding their team members from challenging situations that could help them grow?

But if a manager insulates team members too much, they could become resentful at being left out. And they'll never learn how to fend for themselves, which could limit their careers.

To help leaders start shifting to Multiplier behaviors, have them try this tip:

- **Set the tone that it's important for your direct reports to push themselves and grow from criticism and mistakes.** While you don't want to shield people from reality, you do want to help them feel intellectually safe — to stick their necks out with their best thinking and work, even if they don't always succeed. You can do this by sharing stories of your own failures and, importantly, what you learned from them, and by emphasizing the importance of improvement when talking about their work.

Say something like:

I'm impressed with all of your hard work to improve in X.

We're trying this for the first time, so chances are it won't go perfectly, but that's OK—we'll learn a lot for next time.

8. Strategist

Many leaders are big thinkers who can see a brighter future and exactly how to get there. And they want to inspire others with their compelling vision.



If leaders are too prescriptive, people either won't buy their plan or will defer to them on every detail.

While it's important for leaders to give their teams big-picture context for the work they do—the “why” behind the “what”—you can have too much of a good thing. If leaders are too prescriptive, they'll pour their energy into selling others on their plan, but people either won't buy it or will become human widgets—deferring to the boss to tell them how to get there because there's no room for them to wrestle with tough questions or discover solutions for themselves.

To help leaders start shifting to Multiplier behaviors, have them try this tip:

- **Instead of presenting a plan, frame the key question — and challenge your team to fill in the blanks.** Pose a challenge question to your team. For example:

What would we need to do to complete 1,000 inspections this year instead of 750?

Then, give them the opportunity to share ideas, identify problems and possibilities, challenge assumptions, explore the pros and cons of potential strategies, and build on one another's thinking. When it's time to enact the plan, instead of having to convince them it's a good idea, they'll be itching to get started—because they had a hand in creating it.



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Sometimes a 90 percent solution executed with 100 percent ownership is better than getting it 100 percent right with a disengaged team.”

— Liz Wiseman

9. Perfectionist

Some leaders set a very high standard for themselves and their team, and they want to help people produce outstanding work — and feel the satisfaction that comes with it.



Give the three “whats”— what’s going on, what’s the impact of that, and what needs to happen next—so people know what they’re in charge of.

But if a leader's quest for excellence includes persistent criticism or a trail of red ink on every piece of work, team members might think their boss will find flaws no matter what, so why should they give their best effort? They'll stop taking pride in the final product and ultimately may decide to take their efforts elsewhere.

To help leaders start shifting to Multiplier behaviors, have them try this tip:

- **Ask the other person to self-assess before offering your critique.** Your internal error detector may be going off like crazy. But before you jump in with your red pen, ask the person:

How would you rate this against the standards we discussed?

Then use what you learn. Maybe they realize that the work needs improvement and could use a few smart questions from you to help them come up with solutions. Or, if they feel they're hitting the mark, you can give feedback on what you see, tying your observations back to the work standards.

Becoming a Multiplier.

If you recognized the Accidental Diminisher types described above, start making the shift now to create a Multiplier culture in your organization.

Multipliers have a rich view of the intelligence of the people around them. They assume: people are smart and will figure it out. They see their organization as full of talented people who are capable of contributing at much higher levels. They take stock of their team members by asking themselves, In what way is this person smart?

Multipliers give people roles and assignments that tap each person's natural genius. And they bring people together in an environment that liberates their best thinking. In doing so, Multipliers achieve exceptional results while making everyone around them smarter.

FranklinCovey provides leadership development solutions that will help you turn all your managers into Multipliers. Our world-class learning solutions — delivered Live-Online, On Demand, or in person — are designed to build exceptional leadership skills at every level of your organization.

To learn more, email us at info@franklincovey.com, or visit franklincovey.com.

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