



## Checklist Leadership

-Mark Haeussler, CEO

Here is a list of things that do not work in leadership:

### 1. Lists

The Internet is full of lists that tell you what to do to be a better leader. Sorry to tell you, but lists do not work.



The reality is this: brain science says that we will forget the list, or only remember the items on the list that align with what you already thought. We can hold three things in our current active thoughts, what technology people might call our “RAM” memory, and seven things in our short-term active memory (like recalling a seven-digit phone number). Science tells us that we will not remember the list when we most need it – in the moment.

Lists run the risk of our confirmation bias – noticing and remembering the things we already deem are correct. Lists can reaffirm what we believe more than challenge us to the next level in our leadership. Sometimes, these lists get spread in emails, people might talk about them over the coffee maker, and then promptly forget them. Or, perhaps, they resonate with the list because it validates their thoughts. Not because they want to, but because that is how our brains work. It takes a keen leader to catch themselves in biases.

Further, life, and our leadership within it, are not orderly things, where events, opportunities, and issues present themselves in a systematic manner. So much of leadership requires success *in the moment* and not in a way where a reference list or flowchart of concepts is at the ready. If you are cramming your head full of lists, you are taking a large portion of your current brain attention that could better be used in paying attention to what is going on around you. Who really pulls out a checklist during a challenging conversation and follows the steps?! No one, of course. That would have people thinking they work with a robot, and people expect to be led in a genuine manner.

To learn leadership, to really *become* a great leader, is to *be* the attributes you seek. The next time you see a checklist of leadership items that resonate with you, look through it and pick *one thing* on the list that would be most useful to pay greater attention, and then work on it every day. Find a mentor a coach who will help you develop useful practices that align well with the genuine you – and the genuine you that you are becoming.

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