

HEADLINE: A Winning Approach to Leadership Development

By Russ Becker, President and CEO of AchieveForum

Imagine Bill Gates' reaction if someone had claimed his-Gates' biggest problem when he ran Microsoft was winning too often. Just a guess here, but I don't think it-that judgement would have had much impact on how-the way he-Mr. Gates went about his business or carried himself as a leader. After all, in the world of big business, it's all about winning, which winning is what you are supposed to do, because it translates into making more money.

But On the other hand, for a few moments, let's consider if-whether winning too much really does hinder-hinders someone's leadership ability. Marshall Goldsmith, a world-renowned expert on executive coaching, thinks-so believes it does. He calls it-this phenomenon the dark side of success.

While everyone Everyone is willing to talk about the fruits of victory, he explains, but very few want to open up about the challenges they face as a successful leader.

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Mid-level and senior leaders who have risen through the ranks are, by definition, successful people. Goldsmith has devoted his career to help successful leaders make lasting changes to take their leadership to the next level. Successful leaders have attributes that helped them achieve a long list of accomplishments. But as they move to higher levels of organizational life, many of their peers share those same attributes. Everyone is functionally skilled. Everyone is smart. Everyone is up to date on the latest technical aspects of the job.

Success doesn't always breed success

Mid-level and senior leaders who have risen through the ranks are, by definition, successful people, with attributes that have helped them achieve long lists of accomplishments. Goldsmith has devoted his career to helping successful leaders make lasting changes to take their leadership to the next level. He describes his coaching clients as "mega-successful" people." That means he has seen the impact of leadership on a grand scale. That impact, he says, is not always pretty.

Part of the problem is that, as leaders move to higher levels of organizational life, many of their peers share the same attributes. Everyone is functionally skilled. Everyone is smart. Everyone is up to date on the latest technical aspects of the job. As leaders become more successful, mastering the more subtle attributes help them achieve greater success. The fact is, the higher they leaders rise, the more their opportunities for growth become behavioral. As leaders become more successful, mastering their subtler attributes and behaviors helps them achieve even greater success.

In his book, *What Got You Here Won't Get You There*, Goldsmith explores 20 self-limiting behaviors— he calls them derailers— that can stall the progress of highly successful leaders.

And what's What's at the top of the derail list? Winning too much.

During a recent interview with the *Harvard Business Review*, Goldsmith was asked to name the number one problem of the leaders he has worked with during his long, storied career. He replied: "Winning too much! Successful leaders love winning in every context! Is it meaningful? Win. Is it critical? Win. Is it

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trivial? Win. Is it not worth it? Win anyway! Imagine a leader who has a hard day at work. She goes home. Her husband or partner says, 'I had a hard day!' and she replies, 'You had a hard day? Do you have any idea what I had to put up with?' Most successful leaders are so competitive that they have to prove they're more stressed out than the people they live with!"

Why is it so important for smart, successful people to win in every situation? Goldsmith observes that the lower leaders are in the organization, the more important it is to be a winner. But the higher they go, the more dysfunctional it is to be a winner.

"For great achievers, it's all about 'me,'" Goldsmith says. "For great leaders, it's all about others."

Because of the profound difference between "I win" and "they win," it is incredibly challenging to transition from a great achiever to a great leader.

The essence of FeedForward for deep leadership development

Winning too much is just one of 20 derailers leaders may might have in their behavioral repertoire. So, that begs the question, Multiply the challenges of winning too much by as much as 20, and it can be intimidating to leaders who need to rise to the next level. What can they do about it this? Goldsmith suggests a solution that can be applied once a leader identifies his or her derailers—a process called "feedforward." Goldsmith offers a FeedForward tool to help leaders take advantage of this process.

Once leaders identify their derailers, they need to go through a process Goldsmith calls "FeedForward." This The feedforward process can be a positive, upbeat way to help leaders improve performance. Goldsmith says FeedForward-feedforward is the essence of leadership development, according to Goldsmith. And it's — a — a practice that can serve leaders well both inside and outside of the workplace. It's

FeedForward is a simple way to improve leadership skills process, so people have no excuse not to try it.

To understand feedforward, think of what you know about feedback. Giving feedback, is a well-known skill in the workplace, is common practice and it's all workplace skill based on the past. A: people work person works for a specific period of time, and the manager then managers or leaders sits sit down with them after the fact and critiques their work. Here's the problem with that model: No one can change the past.

So, the The first rule of FeedForward-feedforward is that it's not about the past. FeedForward Feedforward is all about what a leader can do in the future, about letter-letting others know what they'd like to accomplish and asking for ideas about how to do it. It's about simply saying to another person (it can be anyone), "I want to get better at..." and expanding-unpacking a personal pool of possibilities, with ideas from others.

"If feedback is past tense," Goldsmith says, "FeedForward-Feedforward is future perfect."

FeedForward-Feedforward overcomes the two biggest obstacles that leaders face with negative feedback: 1) successful people in dominant positions don't want to hear criticism, and 2) their subordinates rarely want to give it.

FeedForward-Feedforward shrinks-circumvents criticism and shrinks discussion to the intimate dimensions of two human beings.

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~~FeedForward~~ invites a common, human reaction to situations, which and that works the other way around, too, when leaders are addressing the behavior of those they lead. Which leads to the second rule of feedforward: leaders cannot judge or critique the ideas they receive.

Ideas are gifts that help leaders grow

Typically, the quickest way to shut down others is to evaluate or judge the ideas they offer. ~~Because~~ The goal beauty of FeedForward feedforward is to is that it is the opposite: leaders hear and consider new ideas. ~~That means~~ leaders can't say "Good idea," "Bad idea," "I already knew that," "That will never work," or anything else that carries the freight-weight of judgement.

~~According to Goldsmith, says~~ FeedForward feedforward works best when leaders stop talking, listen and take notes. They should then treat the ideas they receive as gifts, and express gratitude to those who share their thoughts.

When leaders respond to FeedForward feedforward with a simple ~~thank-thank~~ you, amazing things are possible — for their organizations, their colleagues and their own performance as leaders. FeedForward Feedforward can be life-changing, both for the leader and the organization.

To ~~give-help~~ leaders and even deeper more deeply understand and experience ~~of Goldsmith's this~~ way of coaching, AchieveForum has teamed up with Goldsmith to develop a modern learning solution called High-Performance Leadership: Applying Insights from Marshall Goldsmith. In every way possible, this program helps successful people address their own behavioral challenges, so they can in order to improve their performance as leaders.

~~Any Any~~ leader, whether they are winning too much or experiencing other leadership derailers, ~~leader~~ can gain insight from this program and apply ~~the its~~ practical techniques ~~it teaches~~. Learn more about how leaders can improve their performance by visiting the [AchieveForum website](#).

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