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# The Three Traps Of Coachability For Leaders And How To Combat Them



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Effective leaders are continuously exercising their coaching muscle to engage team members for maximum performance. But, what about the leaders themselves? How often

do you ask yourself "Am I coachable? In my coaching practice, particularly when I work with executive leaders, I find three common hurdles to their coachability, and therefore their continuous improvement as leaders. I call them the "I" traps because, if left unchecked, they can trap you in mediocrity and ineffectuality. Alternatively, successful leaders display three crucial characteristics that positively combat the "I" traps.

**I am the expert.** Once you've climbed the ladder to the executive ranks, you have clearly earned the rank of expert. That is simply the price of entry. But believing you already know all the answers can cloud your ability to truly listen and seek input and feedback from others. You might pretend that you're open to input from others, but are you really? Once you've quit listening, you can lose your people. When you're closed to new ideas, you risk losing customers, market share and ultimately your company's competitive viability. How do you prevent the expert trap? *Develop courage.* Leadership and growth are about having the courage to be open to ideas other than your own, trying new things that may take you out of your comfort zone and giving your team, and yourself, permission to fail.

**I don't have time.** There's no question that leadership at the top is demanding. Pressure to perform can be intense. So often, I see executives who *say* they want to grow and improve but who *act* to the contrary. Behavior dictates your priorities. Investing in your development as a leader is just that: an investment of time, energy and focus. Trust me, the ROI will pay off in spades and your leadership path will accelerate. *Practicing discipline* is the foil to the time trap. Making leadership improvement stick is about creating more effective habits and processes, then surrounding yourself with stakeholders who will hold you accountable.

**I must be invincible.** So often, successful leaders believe they can neither show their weaknesses nor reveal their failures -- that such transparency somehow makes them ineffective as a leader. Nothing could be further from the truth. In fact, it's quite the opposite. In my experience, authentic leadership is the key to success. Be real and you will build trust, which in turn will inspire followership and strengthen engagement. The invincible trap can be dodged by *cultivating humility*. Real leadership is not about you -- rather, it's about the team and the business and/or mission. It's about leading with a sense of purpose, and in turn, giving that purpose to those you lead. Lao-tzu, the ancient Chinese philosopher, [said it best](#), "The great leader works without self-interest and leaves no trace. When all is finished the people say, 'We did it ourselves.'"

Any chance you have fallen prey to the "I" traps? I challenge you to ask those around you to answer that question. Your job is to listen, say thank you, and start conquering the "I" traps today through courage, discipline and humility.

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