

Learning From Mistakes: 10 Things Beginning Leaders Should Know



Forbes Coaches Council ⓘ

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Forbes Coaches Council



Top business and career coaches from [Forbes Coaches Council](#) offer firsthand insights on leadership development & careers.

You've probably heard that old saying, "hindsight is 20/20." Those words could never be more accurate than when it comes to mistakes made early on in a career. When you have the drive, the tenacity and the knowledge to make a mark in your current position, it's all too easy to think you've got it all figured out.

But experience matters and mistakes happen, no matter what your stage in life and in business. And while not all of them are avoidable, knowing where some of the dangers lie can help you cruise around some of the more common mistakes by learning from those who came before you. [Good business advice](#) is hard to come by, so try not to ignore it when it is offered freely.

Below, 10 members of [Forbes Coaches Council](#) discuss advice they wish they'd known about earlier in their careers, something that they now regularly share with all their clients. Here's what they said:



Members share a few mistakes beginning leaders can make. PHOTOS COURTESY OF INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS.

1. Be Careful How You Present Yourself

We communicate more with eye contact, facial expressions and tone than we realize. In face-to-face interactions, a play on Ralph Waldo Emerson's quote comes to mind, "How you present yourself speaks so loudly I can't hear what you say." - Thomas Larkin, [Communico Ltd](#)

2. Utilize Your Mentors To The Fullest

While I was lucky to have wonderful mentors, I didn't deliberately look for them or fully utilize them. People love to help and to share their wisdom. Asking questions, keenly listening, requesting radically honest feedback and implementing feedback with crisp alacrity are all behaviors that lead to great growth and success. I do all of that now as often as I can, and I recommend my clients do so. - Amie Devero, [Amie Devero Coaching and Consulting](#)

Read more in [Seven Proven Insights Into A Powerful Mentoring Relationship](#)

3. Don't Allow Failure To Wreck Your Future

We are not defined by yesterday, but rather by how we shape tomorrow. Too many times we allow failures — i.e., lost accounts, slammed doors, relational failings or wrong decisions — to wreck our professional futures. It doesn't have to be that way. Each day we have the ability to do a "gut check" and embrace what's ahead. To be successful we must intentionally define our tomorrow. - L. Lavon Gray, PhD, [Lavon Gray Consulting Group, LLC](#)

4. Be The One Who Makes The Difference

The best advice that I give to anyone, no matter what stage of their career or business they are in, is to develop the confidence to explore new options and create their own opportunities. The successful person is the one who takes the initiative to look past the obvious and find the treasures that remain hidden to those who don't put forth that extra effort. Be the one who makes the difference! - Shelley Hastings, [Synergy Empowerment Coaching, LLC](#)

5. Take Time To Think

A piece of business advice that I wish I had followed earlier in my career is to use the 24 to 48 hour rule when something is about to evoke an emotional response. I advise my clients to use this "rule" because the world and one's perspective can change in a day, so it's often better to just think about the response for a short time versus launching. - Karen Dee, [Accendo Leadership Advisory Group](#)

6. Be Transparent And Communicate Clearly

Transparency and clear communication from the get-go with your team and your clients is key. Assumptions often lead to misunderstandings and can even jeopardize relationships. The more transparent you are about the direction and motivation behind your company vision and mission, the clearer your team will be on how to get there. Make sure everyone is on board early on. - Lital Marom, [UNFOLD Media Group](#)

7. Don't Be Arrogant

A management qualification does not make you experienced or a manager right off the bat. Stay humble and learn everything you can from those who have been doing it longer than you. Of course your ideas are valid and you should share them, but don't lose people's respect by not listening or taking the lesson in every situation. - Victoria Canham, [Ahead Together Ltd](#)

8. Be Intentional About Whose Advice You Take

Too often, people seek advice from people just because they are friends, easy to talk to or accessible. Ask yourself "Is the person candid, connected, and competent?" If the answer to these three questions is "yes," then seek out their advice. By being disciplined and having objective criteria, you will improve the probability of getting high-quality advice. - Rob Fazio, [OnPoint Advising](#)

[Forbes Coaches Council](#) is an invitation-only community for leading business and career coaches. ***Do I qualify?***

9. Bet On Yourself

So many of us wait for others to discover us, instead of taking risks on our own ideas and ability. The best opportunities aren't always the ones that look the most stable. When we bet on ourselves, we expect to create our success instead of hoping others will recognize it. - Nina Cashman, [Pave Your Way](#)

10. Explore Other Areas Of Business

Having been an HR leader for 15 years, I wish I had taken more risks and explored other areas of business in lateral career moves instead of perfecting my career in HR to climb the HR business ladder. The knowledge that I have learned over the years from different companies, experiences and people has been invaluable to me, and when I look back I wish I crossed lanes more in other areas. - Kristy McCann, [GoCoach](#)