

Rock Solid

2 Hacks for Improving Your Self-Awareness as a Team Leader

Thought leader, author, and leadership consultant Reggie McNeal makes this provocative statement in his book *Practicing Greatness: Self-awareness is the single most important body of information a leader possesses*.

With the impact of a defibrillator, those words are a jolting reminder of what is at stake when leaders run low on their capacity to self-assess.

Long story short, awareness of how you come across in your leadership role is of supreme importance. Failure here comes with a **very high price tag**.

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When it is all said and done, to be effective in life and leadership requires a sizeable chunk of self-awareness—the capacity to know who you are and to understand the impact you have on those around you. **And to do so in real time.**

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While the topic of self-awareness contains a wide range of implications and applications, for a moment I want to drill down on the ability to self-audit your impact **in leadership settings**.

To chase this down a bit, let's look at a venue that is a reality for many of us: the weekly team meeting. Have you ever been in a meeting where the leader has no idea about how aloof he is? No idea about the personal crisis you are facing? No idea about how she is coming across? No idea about how self-promoting his comments are? No idea that her account is past due in recognizing the efforts of the team? No idea that he treats you as simply a hired hand?

Sadly, the key here is “no idea”. No clue. Limited self-awareness. Blind spots—big ones.

But the reality is that every leader has blind spots. We are all works in progress. None of us perform perfectly day in and day out. The issue, then, is whether or not we are engaged in the ongoing process of addressing our blind spots.

So how do you go about upsizing your self-awareness? How do you make those moments of “no idea” the exception, not the rule?

I've got two thoughts for your consideration.

- 1. First, through the years of leading team meetings, I have found it very helpful to take the last ten minutes to do a 'meeting post-mortem'. At the front-end of the meeting, I will set the stage by letting everyone know that we will designate the last few minutes to an appraisal of the effectiveness of our meeting, calling out what went well and what could be improved. In doing this, I have found that you quickly open the door to some very candid comments if you, as the leader, trigger the discussion by acknowledging your own misses—things you would do differently next time.**
- 2. Second, ask a trusted colleague to give you some unvarnished feedback. This could be from someone who sits in the team meeting as a regular participant or it could be from someone you have invited in for this purpose. Recently, I was asked to participate in a team meeting of someone whom I had been working with in a consulting relationship. I got a ringside seat to see him in action. Later that day in our time of debrief, I was able to affirm a number of things that he did well. But I was also able to address some blind spots, particularly about a counterproductive, albeit unintended, 'tone' that he was setting and some choice of words that was defeating for the team.**

So what's your gameplan for enhancing your self-awareness—for embracing the blind spots of your leadership?

I hope you have one. And so do those who look to you for leadership.