

Five Lies of Leadership

How do you know you haven't fallen for a leadership myth that simply isn't true?

Answer: sometimes you don't.

Too many leaders hold a few damaging core beliefs that simply aren't true.

Myths are everywhere in our culture. It's not that hard to roll our eyes at people who fall for urban legends.

But there are also leadership myths: things that many leaders believe that really aren't true.

I think we've all fallen for a few.

But how many stubborn leadership myths are you still falling for?

Once you abandon them, you'll be amazed at the progress you make.

5 Dumb Myths You Should Abandon

Here are 5 that I hate to admit I have fallen for at one time or another in my leadership.

1. Success Will Happen Overnight

Who hasn't fallen for this? And if you don't *believe* it, you've secretly wanted it, haven't you?

Yet there are very few overnight successes. Or as my wife has pointed out, it was a very long night.

Whether it's bands like [Passenger](#), [The Band Perry](#) or even the [Beatles](#), musicians often struggle in obscurity and near defeat for years before they break through. Same for writers, businesses and many other leaders.

Even [North Point Church](#), launched in 1995, actually declined in attendance from its initial launch over its first few years before rebounding and becoming the story many church leaders know today. Ditto with [LifeChurch](#), the largest church in America with 29 locations and 80,000 people. Their first venture into multisite failed.

Just ask any of the founders: they'll tell you those first few years were lean and very difficult.

So what do you do?

Set realistic expectations. Work hard. Celebrate progress, even incremental progress.

As Winston Churchill (whose life was characterized mostly by disappointment prior to World War 2) said, success is going from failure to failure without loss of enthusiasm.

2. Smart Work, Not Hard Work, Will Win The Day

Okay. Working smarter *is* better than simply working harder. Very true.

Working 100+ hours a week is the answer to very few problems and actually only creates more problems. If you can be more efficient and more effective, by all means do so.

But smart work is no substitute for *hard* work. Working smarter doesn't mean you can put in a few hours, hit cruise control and coast to victory.

You will always have to work hard on your leadership. You'll always have to work hard on leading yourself, your team and your mission.

That might not mean 70 hours a week, but it won't mean cruising into the sunset. When you stop growing, so do the people around you.

And eventually, the good people will leave. They want a leader to push them and push the mission forward.

3. I Will Get Universal Buy In

This myth is so seductive.

There will be a day when I become a good enough leader that I will announce our next move and everyone will applaud wildly, right?

Nope.

That day will never come.

You might get most people to buy in, but you will never get everyone to buy in.

This kills most leaders because it causes them to procrastinate. The myth makes them 'wait' until all the conditions are right to launch their big move.

Conditions will never be perfect. 'Everybody' will never buy in.

Sometimes you just need to lead.

If you want to read more about how to lead change in the midst of opposition, I wrote [Leading](#)

[Change Without Losing It: Five Strategies that Can Revolutionize How You Lead Change While Facing Opposition](#) to help leaders lead without universal buy in.

4. There's A Silver Bullet

So there's *one* thing that will turn everything around right? A silver bullet? A model I can just embrace and press play and everything will magically be wonderful? Right?

If I only:

Was a North Point strategic partner, my church would automatically grow....

Had person X on my staff, all our problems would be gone....

Built a brand new building, it would solve all the issues we're facing...

Right?

Wrong.

As my friend [Casey Graham](#) says, [systems trump silver bullets](#).

And they really do. If you have a problem, the *system* you're using created it.

To change the outcome, change the system. There is no easy way out.

5. One Day I Will Arrive

No you won't.

And if you do, you'll arrive to learn you've missed the point.

Effective leaders keep growing. They never stop.

One of the characteristics of great leaders who stay fresh is curiosity. (I actually write about the connection between curiosity and cynicism in my new book, [Didn't See It Coming](#).) Top leaders are just relentlessly curious, and the curiosity keeps them growing.

Organization that become complacent, like people who become complacent, inevitably decline.

The more successful you are, the more you will be tempted to think you have arrived.

That's why the greatest enemy of your future success is your current success.

Busting those 5 leadership myths have helped me grow as a leader.

How about you? What myths are you busting through?

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