



184: BLIND SPOTS THAT DESTROY TEAMS

EPISODE NOTES

Thank you for joining the Craig Groeschel Leadership Podcast! Sometimes, the greatest threats to your leadership aren't the big fires that you can see; it's the small cracks that you can't see.

In this episode, Craig shares two more leadership blind spots that great leaders should be aware of in their teams. The two blind spots covered are leaders who:

1. Care about people, but tolerate underperformance.
2. Keep control, but kill ownership.

1. Leaders who ... care about people, but tolerate underperformance.

These leaders are difficult to spot because they often appear to have the best of intentions, but they are actually destroying teams.

Why? Because they won't confront what needs to be corrected.

To keep everyone happy, they avoid tough conversations. They excuse laziness and lower the standards to maintain peace.

But what feels like love is avoidance in disguise.

Unfortunately, these leaders will create unsanctioned incompetence: allowing underperformance without correction.

In reference to [John 1:14](#), Craig points to the example of Jesus, saying that great leaders are full of grace and truth. They care deeply and challenge directly.

Here are signs to look for:

- **Look for responsibility avoidance.** These leaders know there's an issue, but they refuse to address it.
- **Look for double standards.** They are inconsistent in their standards; some people get a pass while others don't. Remember, you'll never have a consistently healthy culture with inconsistent inputs.
- **Look for frustrated high performers.** High performers who are forced to carry the load of underperformers will eventually stop caring or quit.

How do you correct this kind of leader? You teach them that clarity is kindness. Being truthful and clear is kind because that's what helps teams grow.

“Teach them that clarity is kindness.”

—CRAIG GROESCHEL

2. Leaders who ... hit the goals, but hurt the team.

These leaders care so much that they're afraid to trust. But rather than empowering others, they become overly controlling.

Here's the principle: what feels like control to them is interpreted as distrust by their teams.

Difficult to spot, these leaders keep high expectations and create early wins. Unfortunately, this comes at a high cost.

Leaders who hold tight to control do three things. They ...

1. **Limit leadership development.** There are high-potential leaders in your organization. Controlling leaders never give them a chance to lead, learn, and grow. Remember, you don't find great leaders; you build them.
2. **Suppress initiative.** If one leader does all the thinking, their team will never learn to think for themselves. This results in team members who wait, hesitate, and disengage. Control kills creativity, which eventually kills motivation and buy-in. Team members under these leaders will never have an ownership mindset because they only follow orders.
3. **Lower the ceiling.** Controlling leaders slow progress because they insist on making every decision, but they lack the bandwidth. If everything depends on one leader, they will become the lid and stunt growth.

So, how do you correct this kind of leader? Here are some practical ways:

- **Teach them to delegate authority, not tasks.** The leader needs to give their team autonomy with projects while still being present (asking the right questions, giving feedback along the way, etc.). Remind the leader of this: failure is inevitable, but it's progress in motion.
- **Teach them to embrace imperfection as part of progress.** You're not looking for flawless execution; you're looking for growth, confidence, and future multiplication.

You can have control, or you can have growth, but you can't have both.

A controlling leader might ask: What if our high performer becomes great and leaves?

You could ask them: What if you limit them and they stay?

“YOU CAN HAVE CONTROL, OR YOU CAN HAVE GROWTH, BUT YOU CAN’T HAVE BOTH.

–CRAIG GROESCHEL

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Here are exercises you can do to grow as a leader. Ask yourself and your team these questions:

1. Craig warned about leaders who “care about people, but tolerate underperformance.” What signs (like responsibility avoidance, double standards, or frustrated high performers) do you recognize in your organization?

2. Think about your team: Are there leaders who keep control, but kill ownership? If so, how is their control affecting leadership development, creativity, or overall buy-in?

3. You can have control, or you can have growth, but you can’t have both. Where might you need to coach leaders to release control and delegate authority so their teams can grow?

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LEADERSHIP ASSESSMENT

QUESTIONS FOR THE TEAM LEADER TO ASK THEIR DIRECT REPORT TO DETERMINE IF THEY CARE ABOUT PEOPLE, BUT TOLERATE UNDERPERFORMANCE:

Question: Tell me about the last time you had a difficult conversation with a team member about their performance. Walk me through how you approached it and what the outcome was.

Look for: Avoidance, vague language, focus on being nice rather than clear, or inability to recall recent examples

Question: When someone on your team consistently shows up late or misses deadlines, how do you typically handle it? Give me a specific recent example.

Look for: Jokes, excuses, rationalizations, or statements like "I don't want to hurt their feelings."

Question: Are there any performance issues on your team right now that you know need to be addressed? What's your plan for dealing with them?

Look for: Awareness without a clear plan, hoping problems fix themselves, or making excuses for underperformers

Question: How do your high performers feel about the workload distribution on the team? What feedback have they given you?

Look for: Strong performers carrying extra weight, complaints about unfairness, or dismissal of high performers' concerns

Question: Describe someone you had to move out of your team or organization in the past year. What was the process, and how long did it take from identifying the problem to taking action?

Look for: Long delays, multiple chances, reluctance to act, or no examples of performance-based exits

RED FLAGS TO WATCH FOR:

- Uses phrases like "I don't want to hurt their feelings" or "I'm trying to be understanding"
- Has a clear awareness of problems but no timeline for addressing them
- Makes excuses for underperformers
- Has double standards, holding some accountable but letting others pass
- High performers show frustration or start leaving
- Problems persist without consequences
- Confuses being nice with being kind
- Avoids direct language in favor of hints and suggestions

QUESTIONS FOR THE TEAM LEADER TO ASK THEIR DIRECT REPORT TO DETERMINE IF THEY KEEP CONTROL, BUT KILL OWNERSHIP:

Question: Tell me about the last significant decision or project you fully delegated to someone on your team, where they had complete ownership from start to finish. How did it go?

Look for: Inability to recall examples or stories where they delegated but controlled every detail

Question: When your team members come to you with ideas or proposed solutions, what's your typical response process? Walk me through a recent example.

Look for: Always needing to approve/modify ideas, rarely extending trust, or inserting themselves into execution

Question: What decisions can your team members make without checking with you first? What's their scope of authority or dollar threshold?

Look for: Very low thresholds, everything requires approval, or vague boundaries that default to "check with me"

Question: How do you develop leadership skills in your high-potential team members? What opportunities have you given them to lead recently?

Look for: Focus on training/watching without real ownership, or reluctance to let others lead

Question: Describe a time when someone on your team made a mistake on something you delegated. How did you handle it, and what did you delegate to them next?

Look for: Taking control back after mistakes, using mistakes as justification to not delegate, or becoming more controlling

RED FLAGS TO WATCH FOR:

- Uses phrases like "it's just easier if I do it myself" or "I need to make sure it's done right"
- Team members frequently ask for permission for small decisions
- High-potential people seem disengaged or leave for more autonomy elsewhere
- The leader is constantly busy/overwhelmed but won't delegate meaningful work
- Team waits for direction rather than taking initiative
- All good ideas seem to come from the leader, not the team
- Decision-making bottlenecks around this leader
- Team members describe feeling micromanaged and/or not trusted

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