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For years I’ve helped people learn ways to become more effective leaders. I’ve given advice on what to do, how to think, or characteristics to have. Some people come to me for help, some take in my advice from a distance, and others aren’t very concerned at all. I don’t know it all but I’ve had my share of days watching bad leaders floating in a wooden barrel on Niagara River. I can give advice about that ride because I’ve either been on it before or stood in amazement with binoculars pressed against my eyes watching others go over Niagara Falls.

When leaders in the real world fall apart, I always cringe because they’re most likely tugging others with them as they land at the bottom of the Horseshoe Falls. Some of those leaders come up for air and survive while others drown and wash ashore miles away in the gorge. Either end point results in disaster for people and organizations.

The thing about bad leaders is that they can be spotted in advance of the catastrophe they contribute to. They typically fit a profile that has many trouble spots. Leadership expert John Maxwell identified twelve trouble spots we typically notice about poor leaders.

A leader in trouble:

1) *Has a poor understanding of people.* They lack empathy and concern and don’t often put themselves “in the shoes” of their subordinates to gain a perspective from ground level.

2) *Lacks imagination.* They find it difficult to think “outside the box.” This infringes on their ability to solve unique problems.

3) *Has personal problems.* Their personal life is a mess--bad relationships, bad finances, bad habits.

4) *Passes the buck.* They seldom accept responsibility when things go wrong, and are usually beating their chests when things go right.

5) *Feels secure and satisfied.* They aren’t willing to stretch themselves to learn and develop any further, ultimately causing them to become irrelevant, outdated, or simply ineffective.

6) *Is not organized.* They can’t find anything, remember anything, or know which direction is left or right.

7) *Flies into rages.* They’re a walking time bomb the majority of the time with most people trying their best to avoid them, causing communication and coordination efforts to break down.

8) *Will not take a risk.* They are afraid of putting their name on the line for anything requiring a big effort for a

high return.

9) *Is insecure and defensive.* They take offense to anything you suggest that doesn’t chime with their direction. Your suggestions are viewed as personal attacks against them.

10) *Stays inflexible.* They are stubborn in their ways and methods and won’t listen to new ideas.

11) *Has no team spirit.* They don’t get enthused about anything involving people working together in a spirited manner. And meeting for a lunch bowl-a-thon or volleyball match in the late afternoon? No way!

12) *Fights change.* They avoid it and won’t initiate it. And they often talk bad about those who introduce it.

If you’re a leader and you find yourself fitting this profile in more than one way, you can get help. Read a few books, take a seminar or two, get in touch with a consultant or coach, or sit down and look at yourself in the mirror for five minutes. If you don’t get help or don’t improve as a leader, you’re inviting career suicide into your life.

If you need some help or would like to talk to me about ways you can improve as a leader, feel free to contact me anytime at [www.AdviceChief.com](http://www.AdviceChief.com).

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