

LEAD

# 1 Leadership Mistake Millennials Say Makes You Look Like a Liar (and a Bit Desperate, Too)

This outdated communication technique no longer works, especially with Millennials.



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*CREDIT: Getty Images*

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In this age of emotional intelligence, the qualities employees look for in good leaders have shifted. In particular, how leaders **react to challenges or criticism** is observed intensely. We live in an age of transparency. Employees believe they have the right to assess the skills of their leadership teams. And with sites like Glassdoor at their disposal, they also have a **new level of power** by sharing their opinions on how well they feel their leaders are doing. One old-school leadership technique is being viewed by employees as highly negative. Using this style can make you lose the respect and credibility of your team, **especially with Millennials**.

## "Defend and Deflect" = The Sign of a Desperate Liar

For decades, managers were trained to fight back against negativity and criticism with the "defend and deflect" method. In an effort to appear right and superior in the face of being wrong, the solution is to get intensely vocal, display confidence in your position, and try to pivot the blame. The [defend and deflect communication model](#) comes from an outdated assumption that to be a good leader, you must always have the answers. Today's more emotionally intelligent leadership approaches (i.e., servant leadership) don't have that expectation. Because of the new levels of transparency and accountability being demanded in the workplace, evolved leaders realize there's a better way to approach these situations.

### Replace It With "Examine and Engage"

In the face of conflict, top leaders now realize it's important to [examine the situation](#) and engage those complaining in a discussion to explore and understand where they are coming from. This provides savvy leaders with valuable information to help them respond in a more positive, effective fashion. In particular, there are two situations in which the examine and engage communication model helps leaders to excel:

1. **When employees don't have enough, or the right, information.** Sometimes, leaders assume their staff has a full understanding of their viewpoint. They don't realize employees are missing vital information that is making them form the wrong assumptions.

2. **Unexpected challenges or aspects of the situation leaders are unaware of.** As a leader, you may not have all the information you need when making decisions. Conflict or criticism can give you an opportunity to reevaluate your decisions and give you [valid reasons to change directions](#). Being more informed enables you to course correct early, helping you to reduce mistakes and setbacks.

## **P.S. Adopting New Leadership Trends Is Good for Your Career**

Now that Millennials make up more than half of our workforce, it's important for seasoned executives in leadership roles to consider how they might update their approaches to gaining (and keeping!) the trust and respect of employees. Modeling the way for work-life balance and [recognizing the expectations and motivations](#) of today's workforce are key to keeping your leadership position in the future.

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