**7 Rookie Mistakes New Leaders Often Make**

By [Ron Edmondson](https://ronedmondson.com/author/lexidad) March 27, 2023 [Church](https://ronedmondson.com/category/church), [Leadership](https://ronedmondson.com/category/leadership)

It’s not unusual. In fact, it’s natural. New leaders often make rookie mistakes.

I’ve been the new leader numerous times. In those seasons, I don’t know as much about the organization as many of the people I’m supposed to be leading.

Each time a leader is new there will be new experiences that challenge everything the leader knows or has experienced previously. It’s like you’re a rookie leader all over again.

**Just because a leader is new, however, doesn’t mean they have to**

 **make rookie mistakes.**

I’ve watched new leaders who start strong, find success, and build a long-term healthy relationship. And I’ve watched some new leaders shoot their proverbial foot and take years to recover — if they ever can.

What makes a new leaders beginning years successful? Are there some hard lessons learned?

I seem to learn best from my mistakes and observing the mistakes of others. Let me share a few I’ve made or seen.

**7 rookie mistakes new leaders**

**often make:**

**Making changes too fast upon arrival.**

Effective change is built on trust. Trust is nearly impossible to gain quickly. There may be some things you have to move quickly to do — especially if everyone knows the change is needed or it’s a mission critical change. When changing things, which impact an organization’s core identity – the kind of change where people are thinking “if it ain’t broke don’t fix it” – it is wise to take your time.

You have to build relationships, bring people along and earn their trust first. Only then can you make change, which will build rather than disrupt community and have lasting impact.

**Holding grudges when someone doesn’t agree.**

That’s the thing about new leaders. They are new. So, naturally they will do things differently than previous leaders. Everyone expects that, but it is completely normal that change causes tension. People will complain. And they may not complain to the leader, but they will resist change. It’s a rookie mistake to hold it against some of the initial complainers.

Whenever I left a position, some of my more loyal supporters were people not crazy about some of the first changes we made. They had to adjust to new. Again, they have to learn to trust me. Some people do that better and faster than others.

The wise thing for me to do was to forgive easily and extend grace. A humble approach helps build solid relationships – even from some who were once critics.

**Controlling every decision.**

There will be things that need to be controlled. I have written about the [things I do control in the initial days](https://ronedmondson.com/2014/12/5-areas-i-have-micromanaged-in-church-revitalization.html) of my leadership. Some of those I had to control most of my time there. They were so vital to what we were trying to do. Yet, those things we control should be rare. Leaders need to empower people. Delegate. Welcome the input of others. Allow some things to happen without the leaders’ direct input.

Frankly, this takes discipline for some of us leaders to allow things to happen outside of our control, but it communicates to people you are trying to lead that their input matters. And you communicate you want to lead a team and not issue decrees.

One of the good things about “new” is it often triggers new momentum. But when a leader takes all the glory for the wins, they are deciding who will help them get to the next win. People want and desire to feel needed.

Celebrating the difference others have made to success makes everyone feel a part of the team and builds a healthy culture. People will sacrifice again if they know their contribution was appreciated.

**Refusing to make or admit a mistake.**

A sure way to lose people’s support, especially as a new leader, is to pretend to have all the answers or that you never make a mistake. Or, when you won’t ask for the opinion of those who have been there longer.

You’ll be proven wrong quickly, but, even worse, the message it sends is you are either egotistical or unaware. It’s very difficult to trust a leader for either reason.

**Devaluing prior work.**

When the new leader arrives and doesn’t recognize the work of the organization existed before them, it quickly alienates people who have been there a while. When I first came to my current church, which was over 100 years old when I arrived, it would have been arrogant (and very unwise) of me to pretend the answer to all their problems had arrived. This church had been seeing God do amazing things long before I was even born. Thousands of people have gone before me – and everyone in our church for that matter – laying the foundation upon which we would build.

The more I acknowledged the history the more trust I built in my ability to lead into the future.

**People-pleasing.**

Everyone expects the leader to lead. Even when we don’t agree with a leader’s decisions, no one thinks a leader should attempt to make everyone happy. This is true even when the complainers are louder than the cheerleaders.

As leaders, we lose support when we say what we think people want to hear, but we aren’t willing to make the hard calls. If we are not making the other rookie mistakes, we are building trust. There more wise and good decisions we make, while valuing the input of others, the more we can make the hard changes.

Leadership is never easy, but new leadership is extremely difficult. It’s a fragile time. The more we can eliminate the rookie mistakes the more successful our leadership will be.