

# Five Main Reasons Why Managers Fail

*Excerpted from The Wall Street Journal/May 2, 1988*

**Failure.** It's every manager's terror. Whatever the reason for the career fall, it's considered shameful and scarring. So much so that managers who fail on the job often spend more time hiding the fact than examining why it happened. Yet nearly every manager trips as he or she moves up the corporate ladder. A study of 191 top executives at six Fortune 500 companies found that virtually all had suffered "hardship experiences" - from missed promotions to firings and business failures.

**1. Inability To Get Along** Poor interpersonal skills represent the single biggest reason for failure - and the most crucial flaw to recognize and remedy. Managers typically can't inspire and win the loyalty of subordinates because they aren't good listeners, don't give and take criticism well and view conflict as something bad instead of something inevitable that has to be handled.

**2. Failure To Adapt** The inability to adapt to change is the fatal flaw of the fast-tracker who clings to a once successful management style or business strategy long after it stops producing results. It's also an increasingly prevalent cause of failure for managers in scores of corporations that have restructured or been acquired.

**3. The "Me Only" Syndrome** Every manager wants to be recognized and rewarded for his or her efforts. But some are too preoccupied with themselves. These are the managers whose overriding concerns are how much credit they're getting, how much money they're making and how fast they're moving up the corporate ladder. Managers have to be authentic team players in today's leaner environment.

**4. Fear Of Action** Halfhearted managers may be limited by their inability to put themselves on the line. They may be diligent workers with new ideas but without the passion or conviction to sell them. Underlying this lack of commitment is fear of failure. Such managers try to prevent a fall by avoiding action, but in doing so actually hasten their own demise.

**5. Inability To Rebound** Managers who succeed early in their careers but then are unable to weather a setback aren't all that unlike those who reach the top. Both groups are incredibly bright and ambitious and make many sacrifices. But those who don't rebound tend to react to failure by becoming defensive, trying to conceal it or blaming others. In contrast, successful managers admit where they've erred and try to correct it.