

Lessons from “Leadership and Self-Deception” in action: Creating self-aware leaders



Feeling frustrated by a lack of team engagement and accountability? The issue might not be your team; it could be you. Often, the root cause of disengaged teams is self-deception at the leadership level. In fact, research shows that “managers account for at least [70% of the variance](#) in employee engagement scores across business units.” The cure? Create self-aware leaders!

The Arbinger Institute’s groundbreaking book, *Leadership and Self-Deception*, reveals how leaders can unintentionally limit their team’s potential. But there’s hope! With a shift in perspective and a dose of self-awareness, leaders can unlock significant improvements for themselves, their teams, and their organizations.

Empower teams through self-awareness

Great teams don't just happen; they're nurtured by self-aware leaders. Everything leadership does, from their actions to their behaviors, [influences company culture and team dynamics](#). While confidence is a key player in effective management, a leader who falls victim to self-deception can create major roadblocks that impact the organization's overall success.

For instance, the "infallibility myth," where a leader believes they're always right, can lead to a disengaged and underutilized team. In this environment, team members might hesitate to share ideas or offer constructive criticism out of fear of resistance or dismissal. This attitude stifles creativity, innovation, and the team's ability to reach its full potential.

Conversely, a self-aware leader can empower their team. By prioritizing self-awareness, leaders can move away from a one-size-fits-all approach and leverage their team's unique strengths and perspectives. This self-awareness unlocks individual strengths and encourages collaboration, leading to greater overall success.

Actionable strategies for self-aware leaders

The best leaders are lifelong learners, and one of the most important aspects of this growth is developing self-awareness. A self-aware leader understands their strengths and weaknesses as well as their biases. With this mindset, leaders can make better choices, build a trusting team, and create a positive work environment. Let's take a closer look at actionable strategies that leaders can take to become self-aware:

Strategies for self-aware leaders



Challenge assumptions

Encourage leaders to actively seek out diverse perspectives and challenge their own biases.



Embrace feedback

Leaders should create a safe space for honest feedback and actively listen to suggestions.



Focus on team success

Shift the focus from individual achievements to celebrating and fostering a collaborative environment.



Empower communication

Implement tools like active listening and open communication to build trust and connection.

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Challenge assumptions

Leaders are human, and just like everyone else, they have biases. To combat these assumptions, the self-aware leader actively seeks new perspectives. When leaders challenge their assumptions, they open the door to new ideas and innovative solutions that someone might have otherwise overlooked. To break the bias bubble and challenge rooted assumptions, leaders should consider expanding their social circles to include people from different departments, backgrounds, and experience levels.

Embrace feedback and improve communication

Building trust and fostering connections within a team requires a leader who prioritizes self-awareness. This means implementing communication tools like active listening and open communication to understand how one's own biases and communication style might be impacting the team.

By actively listening and encouraging open communication, a self-aware leader gains valuable insights into how their actions and words are perceived. This self-reflection allows them to adjust their communication style to create a more collaborative environment where everyone feels comfortable sharing ideas and feedback. Ultimately, empowering communication becomes a two-way street, leading to a more self-aware leader and a stronger, more successful team.

Focus on team success

A self-aware leader understands that true success lies in the team's collective efforts. To cultivate this mindset, leaders should actively focus on strategies that celebrate and empower their team:

- **Celebrate milestones:** A self-aware leader acknowledges all achievements, big or small. This practice reinforces a sense of accomplishment and motivates the team.
- **Embrace collaboration:** Leaders foster a space for shared ideas and problem-solving by creating opportunities for teamwork. This collaboration fuels creativity and innovation.
- **Recognize individual contributions:** Public recognition boosts morale and encourages others to bring their best effort. This focus on individual value strengthens the team's overall success.

Transforming workplace dynamics

Self-aware leaders cultivate a culture of self-discovery, empowering individuals to understand their strengths, weaknesses, and motivations. As a result, team members can [take ownership of their professional growth](#) and contribute to a more collaborative and successful workplace.

From short-term wins to long-term growth

Leaders who prioritize self-awareness move beyond immediate gains to prioritize employee well-being and long-term development; this approach unlocks an engaged workforce. They do this by:

- **Investing in growth:** Offering learning opportunities like workshops, conferences, and educational programs demonstrates commitment to employees' professional journeys.
- **Promoting work-life balance:** A healthy work-life balance is encouraged through flexible work arrangements, remote work options, and a culture that respects personal time.
- **Creating a supportive environment:** By cultivating an environment of open communication, team members are more likely to share challenges and seek support.

Lead by example

Leaders who embody self-awareness inspire their teams to do the same. By fostering a culture of constant learning and growth, everyone on the team will feel empowered to admit their limitations and strive for improvement. And leading by example is the best way to accomplish that:

- **Embrace mistakes:** Openly acknowledging and taking responsibility for missteps sets a positive example; it

- shows mistakes are learning opportunities, not failures.
- **Show humility:** Recognizing limitations and encouraging teams to share ideas creates an environment of mutual learning.
 - **Commit to growth:** Demonstrating a dedication to personal and professional development inspires others to do the same.

The power of collaboration

Leaders who recognize the collective wisdom of their teams unlock a dynamic, innovative, and problem-solving force. This collaborative mindset can be achieved by:

- **Delegating effectively:** Trusting teams with responsibilities and decision-making authority builds confidence and leverages their expertise.
- **Encouraging cross-functional collaboration:** Creating opportunities for teams from different departments to meet and work together fosters unique perspectives and innovative solutions.
- **Promoting a team-oriented mindset:** By recognizing and rewarding team-oriented achievements, leaders reinforce the importance of working together to achieve goals.

The ripple effect of self-awareness in the workplace

By prioritizing self-awareness, leaders can create a [ripple effect of positive change](#) throughout their organization. The fourth edition of *Leadership and Self-Deception* delves deeper into these concepts, providing a practical roadmap for leaders looking to break free from self-deception and build high-performing teams.

Here are some key takeaways from the book that can help leaders unlock their full potential:

- **Self-awareness as a foundation:** Self-awareness is the [foundation of effective leadership](#). By understanding biases, assumptions, and blind spots, individuals can make more informed decisions and build stronger relationships.
- **Creating a culture of accountability:** Learn how to grow an accountable culture where team members take responsibility for their actions and remain committed to continuous improvement.
- **Building trust and psychological safety:** Trust and psychological safety are critical for fostering innovation and collaboration. By prioritizing these elements, leaders can create an environment where team members feel safe taking risks and sharing their ideas.

[Order](#) the newest edition of *Leadership and Self-Deception* to create a more productive and fulfilling work experience for yourself and your team. With practical strategies and real-life examples, this book provides the tools you need to become a more self-aware and effective leader.

