

# How To Avoid Going From Super Boss To Villain In 3 Easy Steps

By [Elizabeth Black](#)

We're all familiar with the scenario...the company's revenue is flat, margins are eroding and the sales contests which were supposed to motivate everyone to land the big deals have cost more than they were worth. What's a company to do other than to bring in "fresh blood"--talent from "the outside" who will inject excitement and a "can do attitude" into management and employees at all levels?

So, the new exec is hired; he or she announces a game plan grounded in turning the company around, and because the new person exudes charisma with a capital "C," the company believes it is on the right track to success.

Fast forward three months later, when "the best executive we could have hired" says, "I had 'em at hello and then I crashed and burned!" What is it that the leader should have done to avoid going from Super Boss to Villain in three easy steps?

## 1. Do more asking than telling

"If I am brought in to save a sinking ship, I have to seize control, act quickly and decisively, and not listen to excuses," many a fallen leader has said. Yes, BUT, if you talk at people, never engage others in healthy, constructive dialogue and talk more than you listen, you cannot begin to understand the company culture and how things really work in this environment. After asking probing questions rather than declaring answers, you may come up with a plan that really can work. There will be plenty of opportunity for action, but make certain you have asked enough questions before you give the marching orders.

## 2. Be versatile in communication style

Marching orders may work in "command and control" cultures, or in times of imminent crisis, but, on the whole, global businesses are fast moving toward a collaborative model and leveraging insights from multiple sources. If your communication style makes people say, "he never listens," or "she yells more than she talks," you may want to consider whether you are mapping your communication style to your listeners or whether you leave it up to them to adjust to your style.

## 3. Focus on where it's possible to add value immediately--in partnership with others

The best way to sustain the goodwill generated during the first-month "honeymoon period" of a leader's term is to find one or two initiatives that key individuals are wrestling with, roll up your sleeves, engage them in joint problem solving, and help them "bring it across the goal line." Notice the pronoun, "them"? You are helping, coaching, adding extra value. You are not taking over and doing it yourself. In this way, everyone will want your help; those who win will have learned valuable lessons; and you will have established your credibility as someone who can get things done with others, rather than as the only person who can make things happen. After all, as a super star, you didn't get there overnight. Nor did you get there alone.

If you remember these steps, the good will offered at "hello" will not be short lived, and the hero will not become the villain.

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