

# How Does Your Ego Get In The Way of Leading?

- by Gary B. Cohen, Executive Coach

**Why is it important to lead with questions?  
Why this strategy over others?**

**O**rganizations are made up of people. Like you, every employee has his/her own goals, aspirations, concerns, experiences, and dreams. And each of us has an ego. The ego allows us to believe that we are capable of performing many tasks successfully. In all likelihood, your ego is what propelled you to a leadership position. Your great effort and desire to succeed led to major accomplishments and accolades.

Here comes the paradox. Egos can vault you into a leadership position, but as a leader, you must set your ego aside. Your ego can prevent you from being an effective and truly great leader.

Before you became a leader, you likely operated as an individual contributor. You used your creativity and resourcefulness to meet objectives: a reduction of resources, an increase in quality, or an increase in revenue. If you asked questions, they were about how you could accomplish a specific task. In general, however, your ego discouraged you from asking questions and disliked having to follow orders. Egos want to accomplish and achieve. And, egos crave recognition from others.

Every time you accomplished a task and met the objective, your career moved forward and your standing in the organization or community grew. With each accomplishment, your ego grew, too. You asked fewer questions and provided more answers. After all, with your success, others came to you as an oracle of information—perhaps even your boss or your boss's boss. You were in control.

As a leader, you must relinquish control. You must shrink your ego and concentrate on your altruism. Your career advancement is no longer a task

oriented. Leadership is about allowing others the chance to achieve and flourish. You advance as a leader only when you place your employees' egos above your own. The heads of many organizations are not able to do this. Their companies may still succeed based upon their drive for individual success, but they are not true leaders or one thing, their employees will not be inspired to reach their full potential because they know they will not receive full credit for their efforts.

So, as a leader, why should you lead with questions? Because questions confer power and control to your employees. It allows their egos a chance to shine. And you, they, and the organization will all be better served.

**GearWorld** by Corey Sauer

