

## The Bad News: Derailment Happens

Since 1983 the Center for Creative Leadership (CCL) has studied executive derailment across North America and Europe. By comparing successful managers to those who derail, CCL has identified specific factors that lead to success and other factors that force once-successful careers off the track. Managers who are aware of those factors and conduct an honest self-assessment of their leadership skills can go a long way toward keeping a career headed in the right direction.

What does CCL mean by “success” and “derailment”? Its research defines a successful manager as one who has reached at least the general management level and who, in the eyes of senior executives, remains a likely candidate for promotion. A derailed manager is one who, having reached the general manager level, is fired, demoted, or reaches a career plateau. It’s important to note that organizations saw the derailed managers as having high potential for advancement, as having impressive track records, and holding a solidly established leadership position – until they derailed. Derailment doesn’t refer to individuals who have topped out in their company’s hierarchy or to managers who elect to stay at a particular level.

Five key characteristics have been observed in derailed executives. Leaders who derail:

1. have problems with interpersonal relationships
2. fail to hire, build, and lead a team
3. fail to meet business objectives
4. are unable or unwilling to change or adapt
5. lack a broad functional orientation.

# The Good News: Success Happens Too

Just as there are clear indicators of derailment, there are also key characteristics associated with successful executives. Leaders who succeed:

1. establish strong relationships
2. hire, build, and successfully lead teams
3. have outstanding track records of performance
4. adapt and develop during transitions.

Perhaps you have received feedback about your performance that describes you in similar ways. This guidebook provides strategies for developing these four characteristics of successful leaders.