

# THE STRAITS TIMES RECRUIT

Classified Jobs 1800-289-9988 • [www.sphclass.com.sg/recruit](http://www.sphclass.com.sg/recruit) • Executive Appointments 1800-289-8822

Small Wonder  
Challenging the Wondrous Mind

Established in 1989,  
Small Wonder is a member of  
the highly-awarded Knowledge  
Universe family of education  
organisations globally.

Be a preschool  
teacher with us.



[www.smallwonder.com.sg/careers](http://www.smallwonder.com.sg/careers)

## How companies can spot bad leaders

### TOP JOB

By Katie Mehnert

Not all leaders are created equal. There are great ones, good ones, alright ones, and downright awful ones. We've all said it before, either aloud or in our own minds, "How exactly did he/she get that spot?"

My 17 years in Global 100 companies and non-profit service has afforded me the opportunity to experience the full spectrum from great to awful. It's not always as easy to detect if you've got a dud, so here are my top 5 signs and some strategies on how to cope.

### 1. It's all about them and never about anyone else.

To lead, is to serve. Service is about putting others first, connecting and determining needs and creating a safe space for people to create, debate, innovate, deliver and improve. Good leaders know business is personal. They are acutely aware of their stakeholders: customers, partners, and investors. In my line of work, this list also includes governments, NGOs, and local communities. Bad leaders put themselves at the center of everything, make every decision, dictate, and create a culture of fear. They are notorious for taking the credit for successes and assigning blame when things go south.

If you have a self-centered power-driven leader, that'll fall fast. The title won't mean a thing when they've wrecked every relationship. Have some compassion...maybe they'll see the light? (But don't count on it.)

### 2. They lack vision.

You know that awesome U2 song, "I Still Haven't Found What I'm Looking For?" That's this leader's theme song. Often times I have seen folks get promoted because they can deliver, yet they can't think beyond their silo. In larger

companies or non profits, it's not just about the divisional vision but how that fits into the bigger picture in an integrated, practical and meaningful way. Tunnel vision is for those who can only see within their frame of view. Yeah, this one kinda sounds like #1 a little bit. Leaders who don't create a vision, drive performance against that vision and create long-term value will fail.

This is the classic "blind leading the blind". If your leader has no vision...expect chaos and confusion.

### 3. Look at tangible results

Leaders get things done. They perform and measure their contributions. This is one of the signs that can send different messages, though. Bad leaders truly think activity = progress. Nope. Activity is just a bunch of moaning about being "busy". It usually manifests into over hiring and loads of waste. This happens because there's no vision in sight or clear lines of accountability. (Yes, these things do build on each other.) Most leaders that fall into this trap are the ones who have no vision, oversubscribe themselves and their teams, micromanage everything, lack the ability to empower people, and fall short on most if not all commitments.

### 4. Hello My Name is KIA. Know. It. All.

Oh my favorite kind of leader is one who knows every answer. Seriously, I can learn a lot from a KIA and so can you. Exceptional leaders possess curiosity. They know what they lack and it's their role to shape a team that brings the knowledge, skills and experience into the room to deliver. There's no debating a KIA, so don't try. Smile and thank them for their great intelligence. Bad leaders parrot everything that others have said and offer no original insights.

### 5. They talk the good talk, but are too good to walk the walk.

Does this one need any explaining? This is about principles and values and your actions being perfectly aligned to what comes out of your mouth. I think of all five this one irks the most. Don't say you are something or going to do something if you don't intend on living up to that promise. I appreciate honesty more than games.

### There is good news... I promise!

Bad leaders don't last. A few things can happen.

1. **They get found out fast.** If they have any potential, and most do, companies will invest in providing development and coaching. This is the best thing that could happen. It's a win for you and the leader. Just remember, everyone's on a journey and those that CAN be saved, are worth the effort, time and money. If your leader has a coach, consider yourself lucky!

2. **Their sponsors retire or leave** the company thus rendering them powerless. Usually they will follow suit.

3. They are escorted out or one day you hear about them "electing to leave".

4. **They are put in a role where they can't harm anyone or anything.** These situations used to baffle me, but it's often this happens with some when the risk is too high to do anything else.

5. **You might decide to leave.** That's perfectly within your right and an option. Just remember though, there are plenty of duds in this world. Some people never learn, however some do learn, grow and get better. Sometimes too, the best learning is having experienced it. Some of my best assignments and growth spurts were due to how I coped with bad leadership.

Katie Mehnert is a global organizational development leader with 17 years of helping people and companies get curious, connect, share, grow and perform better. She was most recently a Director with BP, joining after the Deepwater Horizon incident and worked in various leadership roles worldwide with Shell. She's a dynamic speaker and a popular emerging author having been featured in LinkedIn Pulse, Business Insider, and Yahoo. As a work-in progress marathon runner, wife and working mom, you can follow her daily musings on balancing it all on her blog at [www.katiemehnert.com](http://www.katiemehnert.com), or email her [katie@katiemehnert.com](mailto:katie@katiemehnert.com)

