

MANAGEMENT DERAILMENT  
*Personality Assessment and Mitigation*

Joyce Hogan  
*Hogan Assessment Systems*

Robert Hogan  
*Hogan Assessment Systems*

Robert B. Kaiser  
*Kaplan DeVries Inc.*

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*Author notes.* Joyce Hogan is the Vice President of Hogan Assessment Systems. Robert Hogan is the President of Hogan Assessment Systems. Rob Kaiser is a Partner with the executive development and research consultancy, Kaplan DeVries Inc. Inquiries may be directed to Joyce Hogan, [jhogan@hoganassessments.com](mailto:jhogan@hoganassessments.com), Robert Hogan, [rhogan@hoganassessments.com](mailto:rhogan@hoganassessments.com), or Rob Kaiser, [rkaiser@kaplandevries.com](mailto:rkaiser@kaplandevries.com).

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## INTRODUCTION

The vast body of research on management and leadership that has accumulated over the past 100 years leads to two very different conclusions. On the one hand, many people believe that the effort has largely been wasted. For example, Hamel (2008) argued that the modern study of management is stagnant and out of date, and Khurana (2008) argued that attempts to create a science of management have failed. In an effort to provide guidance to practitioners, Kramer (2008, p. 26) reviewed the leadership literature, commented that it is "...a strange mixture of alchemy, romantic idealism, and reason", and concluded that the lack of consistent, actionable findings prompts some business people "...to wash their hands of the whole subject, talent shortage or no talent shortage."

Other reviewers believe that there are recognized principles of management that can be used to enhance organizational performance (cf. Fayol, 1949). For instance, Bloom and Van Reenen (2007) studied the performance of 732 manufacturing firms in the United States, Great Britain, France, and Germany and found that a firm's financial performance was a function of the degree to which it followed "well-established management practices" in the areas of operations, performance management, and talent management. The more profitable companies enhanced operations through continuous improvement, setting clear performance goals, monitoring and reviewing performance, and aligning incentives with performance. Bloom and Van Reenen replicated these findings using an additional 3,268 firms, including a large sample from Asia. Four of their conclusions are worth noting. First, there are, in fact, some well established principles of management. Second, the companies that use these principles are more profitable than those who do not. Third, senior leadership decides whether or not to use effective management practices. And finally, the best run companies are multi-nationals; the worst run companies are government agencies, non-profit organizations, and companies managed by second generation family members.

The economic literature clearly shows that good management enhances organizational performance and that some managers are better than others. However, Kramer (2008) and other critics are also right—there is little consensus in the psychological literature regarding the characteristics of good managers (cf. Hogan, 2007, pp. 106-109). In contrast, however, the research on bad managers converges rather well. Across studies with different methodologies and in different organizations and national cultures, and across organizational level, the data show that failed managers have bad judgment, can't build teams, have troubled relationships, and can't manage themselves or learn from their mistakes. This research is important for both economic and moral reasons.

### *The Cost of Bad Managers*

When managers fail, it costs time and resources to replace them. Lombardo reported that, in 1985, two *Fortune* 500 organizations asked him for advice on preventing leadership failure (cf. Lombardo, Ruderman, & McCauley, 1988, p. 201). These organizations estimated the cost of a failed executive was \$500,000. Adjusted for inflation, that figure is about one million dollars in 2009. Similarly, a poll of senior human resource executives estimated the cost of derailment as between \$750,000 and \$1,500,000 per senior manager (DeVries & Kaiser, 2003). Another study estimated the cost of a failed executive to be as high as \$2.7 million (Smart, 1999). These costs will grow as the talent pool shrinks (Michaels, Handfield-Jones, & Axelrod, 2001). There are

also hidden costs of bad management associated with golden parachutes, lost intellectual and social capital, missed business objectives, and disengaged employees.

Managerial incompetence has serious moral implications because bad managers cause great misery for their subordinates (Hogan & Kaiser, 2005). The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), a division of the Centers for Disease Control (itself a division of the National Institutes of Health), published a report in 1999 containing some alarming data (NIOSH, 1999). For example, 40% of American workers report that their jobs are very or extremely stressful, and NIOSH concluded that problems at work are more strongly associated with health complaints than any other life stressor, including finances and family problems. Next, consider that organizational climate surveys routinely show that about 75 percent of working adults report that the most stressful aspect of their job is their immediate boss (Hogan, 2007, p. 106).

Academic research supports these findings. Ashforth (1994), Tepper (2000), and Skogstad, Einarsen, Torsheim, Aasland, and Hetland (2007) trace the empirical links between bad managers and employee stress—Kelloway, Sivanathan, Francis, and Barling (2005) provide a fine review of this literature. Bad managers are a major health hazard; they impose enormous medical costs on society, and degrade the quality of life of many people.

### *Base Rate of Bad Managers*

In the 1980s, the conventional wisdom held that the base rate of managerial incompetence was less than 10% (Campbell, 1982). More recent research indicates that this figure was a serious underestimate. In an internet survey of 245 employed adults, Curphy asked: (a) how many bosses have you worked for? and (b) how many of those bosses would you be willing to work for again? Respondents reported that they were willing to work for only 38% of their former bosses (Curphy, 2008). These results are consistent with several published estimates of the frequency of managerial failure.

Table 1 summarizes twelve published estimates of the base rate of managerial failure, which range from 30 to 67 percent, with an average of about 50 percent. These estimates are remarkably consistent despite the fact that they come from distinctly different sources, including documented failure rates in publicly traded companies (e.g., Bentz, 1985a; Shipper & Wilson, 1992), estimates provided by senior executives from a variety of for-profit and non-profit organizations (e.g., Sessa, Kaiser, Campbell, & Taylor, 1998), estimates provided by organizational consultants (e.g., Charan, 2005; Smart, 1991), and estimates provided by organizational researchers (e.g., Milliken-Davies, 1992). Based on the data, we conclude that two-thirds of existing managers are insufferable and at least half will eventually be fired.

## CAUSES OF INCOMPETENCE

### *Where it Started*

Bentz (1967, 1985a, 1985b, 1990) pioneered the study of managerial derailment. In a 30-year study of failed managers at Sears Roebuck and Company, Bentz (1985a) noted that they were uniformly bright and socially skilled; they failed because they: (1) lacked business skills, (2) were unable to deal with complexity, (3) were reactive and tactical, (4) were unable to delegate, (5) were unable to build a team, (6) were unable to maintain relationships with a

network of contacts; (7) let emotions cloud their judgment, (8) were slow to learn, and (9) had an "overriding personality defect."

**Table 1.**  
*Estimated Base Rates for Management Failure*

<i>Source</i>	<i>Estimate</i>
Benz, 1985a	50%
Sorcher, 1985	33%
White & DeVries, 1990	50%
Millikin-Davies, 1992	50%
Shipper & Wilson, 1992	60%
Hogan, Curphy, & Hogan, 1994	55%
Sessa, Kaiser, Campbell, & Taylor, 1998	30%
Fernandez-Araoz, 1999	40%
Smart, 1999	50%
Lombardo & Eichinger, 1999	40%
Hogan & Hogan, 2001	67%
Charan, 2005	40%
	<i>Mean</i> 47%
	<i>Median</i> 50%

### *The Center for Creative Leadership's Research*

In the 1980s, the Center for Creative Leadership (CCL) launched a program of research on derailment. McCall and Lombardo (1983) replicated Bentz' findings by interviewing 20 senior executives from three corporations. Each executive gave two interviews, one about a "successful" executive and one about a "derailed" executive, all of whom were male. Derailed executives were defined as "...people who were very successful in their careers (spanning 20-30 years and reaching very high levels) but who, in the eyes of the organization, did not live up to their full potential... One thing they had in common, however, was that their halted progression was not voluntary" (McCall & Lombardo, 1983, pp. 1-2). The successful and the derailed executives were all bright, were identified early, had outstanding records of achievement, had few faults, and were ambitious and willing to sacrifice. The groups differed in that the successful executives had more diverse accomplishments, handled stress with composure, handled mistakes with grace, involved others in problem solving, and could get along with a wide range of people.

In contrast, the derailed executives failed for ten reasons: (1) Specific business problems, (2) Insensitivity (abrasive, intimidating, bully), (3) Cold, aloof, arrogant, (4) Betrayed trust, (5) Overmanaging—failed to delegate, (6) Overly ambitious, (7) Failed to staff effectively, (8) Unable to think strategically, (9) Unable to adapt to a boss with a different style, and (10) Overly dependent on an advocate or mentor. McCall and Lombardo (1983, p. 6) pointed out that the

"most frequent cause for derailment was insensitivity to others. Under stress, the derailed managers became abrasive and intimidating." Crucially, every derailed manager in this sample had relationship problems (reported in Morrison, White, & Van Velsor, 1987).

Morrison, White, and Van Velsor (1987) replicated the McCall and Lombardo (1983) study, but compared derailed and successful women executives in 25 organizations. The results closely paralleled the findings with men. The problems, in order of most frequently mentioned, were: (1) Unable to adapt to a new boss, (2) Performance problems, (3) Too ambitious, (4) Can't manage subordinates, (5) Poor relationships, (6) Not strategic, and (7) Having a poor image. Only the last theme was unique to women, and relationship problems were somewhat less common for the derailed women. These results suggest that, although there may be some differences in emphasis, the causes of derailment are similar for male and female managers.

Lombardo and colleagues extended and replicated their interview studies using quantitative methods. Lombardo, Ruderman, and McCauley (1988) noted that early research defined failure as a lack of success (see, for example, Boyatzis, 1982; Bray & Howard, 1983; Dunnette, 1967; Thornton & Byham, 1982). They proposed that failure may be less about lacking "the right stuff" and more about having "the wrong stuff"—dysfunctional characteristics associated with failure. They also proposed focusing on failure at the middle to executive level, not on the "weeding out process that occurs at the lower levels" (p. 200). Lombardo, et al. (1988) reviewed four well done qualitative studies all of which concluded that derailment results from personality defects, troubled relationships, inability to build a team, and failures of leadership. Note the personality and relationship themes in these derailment factors.

Lombardo et al. (1988) then conducted two studies to develop a standardized survey for measuring behaviors that distinguished successful from derailed managers. The first study concerned "right stuff" factors and was based on bosses' ratings for 169 upper-level managers, 83 of whom had derailed. Factor analysis of behavioral items reflecting positive skills, knowledge, and attitudes yielded eight scales: (1) Handling business complexity; (2) Directing, motivating, and developing subordinates; (3) Honor; (4) Drive for excellence; (5) Organizational savvy; (6) Composure; (7) Sensitivity; and (8) Staffing. The average scores for all eight scales were lower for the derailed managers compared to the other managers; the greatest difference was for Directing, motivating, and developing subordinates.

In the second study, McCauley and Lombardo (1990) created a survey to measure the "wrong stuff" using six scales derived from factor analysis of bosses' ratings on items intended to represent the themes found in the qualitative studies by McCall and Lombardo (1983) and Morrison et al. (1987). A subsequent review by Zedeck (1995) concluded that the psychometric properties of these scales were adequate. The scales included (1) Problems with interpersonal relationships (sample item, "Has left a trail of bruised people"), (2) Difficulty in molding a staff ("Is not good at building a team"); (3) Difficulty in making strategic transitions ("Can't make the mental transition from technical manager to general manager"); (4) Lack of follow-through ("Makes a splash and moves on without really completing a job"); (5) Over-dependence ("Has chosen to stay with the same boss too long"); and (6) Strategic differences with management ("Could not handle a conflict with a bad boss"). Using bosses' ratings for over 300 middle- to upper level managers from eight organizations, the researchers found that five of the six scales were significantly correlated with independent assessments made by senior management of likelihood to derail in the next five years. The sixth scale, Strategic differences with

management, was only weakly related to such likelihood.

Van Velsor and Leslie (1995) replicated the earlier research to determine whether the findings generalized across national culture and time. They conducted an interview study using the same methodology as the McCall and Lombardo (1983) and Morrison, et al. (1987) studies. The sample included successful and derailed executives from 39 organizations in Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Two noteworthy findings stood out: first, the themes that distinguished derailed executives mirrored those found in the prior studies, including the problem of troubled relationships. Second, the same themes appeared in the European and the American samples. Thus, derailment research generalizes across time, organizations, and cultures.

Van Velsor and Leslie (1995) also compared the results of their cross-cultural study with the previous studies and identified four themes to classify the specific behaviors associated with derailment in each: (1) Problems with interpersonal relationships, (2) Failure to meet business objectives, (3) Failure to build and lead a team, and (4) Inability to change or adapt during a transition. Van Velsor and Leslie (1995) also noted that the four themes were related—"the inability to build and lead a team may have led to a failure to meet business objectives... (or) be a function of some of the more personality- or relationship-oriented factors" (p. 66). They also noted that the stress associated with adapting to change—be it organizational complexity, uncertainty, downsizing, etc.—increases the relationship problems associated with derailment.

McCall and Hollenbeck (2002) studied a sample of global executives living and working in foreign cultures and found that the usual behaviors were linked to derailment abroad. However, McCall and Hollenbeck made two further observations. First, the causes of derailment for the global executives seemed paradoxical: some failed expatriate executives were arrogant, while others were too humble; some were autocratic dictators, while others delegated too much; some were mired in technical details and tactical problems, while others were "too visionary" to get anything done. Second, a strength in one culture could become a fatal flaw elsewhere: "What worked splendidly in one culture could bring disaster in the next. Global transitions required reassessing, sometimes letting go, sometimes adding to, sometimes both, but rarely staying the course" (McCall & Hollenbeck, 2002, p. 6). They concluded that expatriate leadership requires adapting to the local customs and culture, again pointing to the role of versatility and adapting to change.

Eichinger and Lombardo (2003) conducted a predictive study of managerial failure in the U.S. Based on 360-degree feedback ratings for over 1,000 managers and subsequent changes in employment status during a two-year period, they reported that managers fail for the following reasons: (1) poor administrative skills, (2) difficulty making tough choices, (3) lack of strategic thinking, (4) failure to build a team, (5) lack of interpersonal savvy, (6) poor political skills, (7) an inability to deal with conflict, (8) questionable integrity, and (9) low self-awareness. Again, note the prevalence of interpersonal themes. The authors also reported that derailed managers gave themselves better ratings than their coworkers did. They recently summarized their findings as indicating that "... derailment is mostly fueled by a lack of emotional intelligence and learning agility" (Eichinger, Dai, & Tang, 2009, p. 25), emphasizing interpersonal problems and difficulty adapting to change.

In more recent CCL derailment research, Gentry and colleagues show how relationship

problems, leadership problems, and failure to adapt lead to the derailment of middle managers (Gentry, Hannum, Ekelund, de Jong, 2007), university administrators (Gentry, Katz, & McFeeters, in press), managers of Hispanic descent (Gentry, Braddy, Fleenor, & Howard, 2008) and managers throughout the European Union (Gentry, Hannum, Ekelund, & de Jong, 2007), and how derailing behaviors are linked to personality (Gentry, Mondore, & Cox, 2007). They also show that coworker ratings of self-awareness predict risk for derailment (Gentry et al., in press) and getting fired up to five years later (Gentry et al., 2007).

Gentry and Chappelow (2009) regard their research as supporting McCall and Lombardo's (1983) original findings about the dynamics of derailment—that is, strengths that get managers promoted can become liabilities in more senior jobs, weaknesses that were tolerated early in a career eventually matter at more senior levels, success can go to one's head, and events beyond a manager's control can overwhelm intention and effort (i.e., bad luck). The authors noted that failure to adapt is more prominent in the later research; they attributed this to increased complexity and pace of change. Cross-cultural expatriate assignments, merger and acquisition activity, more sophisticated technology and capital markets, and faster rates of promotion that require shifts in behavior and perspective have put a premium on versatility. The old Darwinian rule applies to modern managers: adapt, migrate, or die.

In summary, CCL's derailment research was methodologically diverse, and used both quantitative and qualitative data, inductive and deductive approaches, and retrospective, cross-sectional, and predictive designs. The research produced consistent findings across time, organizations, organizational levels, national culture, and even gender. The reasons managers fail concern poor business performance, leadership, self-control, and especially, relationship management. Moreover, these problems are often exacerbated by major change and periods of increased stress.

### *Other Perspectives*

The popular literature contains many examples of failed leaders. Dixon's (1976) book, *On the Psychology of Military Incompetence*, provides heartbreaking accounts of military disasters caused by incompetent leadership. Finkelstein's (2003) review of business failures contains stories less tragic than Dixon's accounts, but reveals many of the same themes. Finkelstein summarized his findings in terms of "the seven habits of spectacularly unsuccessful people" (p. 238):

- (1) Overestimating their strength and underestimate the strength of the competition.
- (2) Putting personal interests ahead of company interests.
- (3) Being arrogant and making reckless decisions.
- (4) Eliminating anyone who might challenge their decisions.
- (5) Ignoring operations while trying to manage their company's image.
- (6) Minimizing difficult obstacles and not planning accordingly.
- (7) Relying on outdated strategies and tactics.

Pundits often attribute business failure to flawed strategy but Charan and Colvin (1999)

think it is poor execution, defined as "not getting things done, being indecisive, not delivering on commitments." Bossidy and Charan (2002) identify four causes of poor execution. The first involves the CEO (and other executives) not understanding their business and the capabilities of their staff. The second concerns not using sound management practices: setting clear goals, following up, rewarding good performance, and growing talent. The third cause is a culture that doesn't value execution. Finally, execution depends on putting the right people in the right jobs. Ultimately, then, poor execution results from a CEO's failure to fix "people problems" in a timely way. Charan and Colvin (1999) list several reasons CEOs typically give for not dealing with people problems, ranging from blind loyalty to the belief that the problems are temporary to pointing out how a problem executive is liked by Wall Street and the press. Berglas (2009) notes that CEOs use these reasons to excuse their bad staffing decisions and justify their unwillingness to assume responsibility for correcting those bad decisions.

Dotlich and Cairo (2003) list ten characteristics associated with CEO failure: (1) arrogance; (2) melodrama; (3) excessive caution; (4) habitual distrust; (5) aloofness; (6) mischievousness; (7) eccentricity; (8) passive resistance; (9) perfectionism; and (10) eagerness to please. They further suggest that everyone has some of these tendencies, that CEOs are more vulnerable to them because of the pressure at the top of the pyramid, and that self-awareness can mitigate the influence of these tendencies on organizational effectiveness.

Rasch, Shen, Davies, and Bono (2008) developed a taxonomy of ineffective leadership behavior based on accounts from employees subjected to those behaviors. The study is notable for its methodological rigor: the researchers began with a content analysis of a large sample of subordinates' descriptions of observed destructive leadership behavior. They developed a coding scheme to classify these behaviors, and then confirmed the categories using survey items reflecting the behaviors in each. The resulting taxonomy is consistent with prior research: (1) Persistent people problems; (2) Poor emotional control; (3) Over-controlling, (4) Poor task performance; (5) Poor planning, organization, and/or communication; (6) Rumor-mongering and inappropriate use of information; (7) Procrastination; (8) Failure to consider human needs, and (9) Failure to manage and nurture talent. Three of their findings warrant special attention. First, they found no sex differences in the frequency of these behaviors. Second, the category of bad behavior that had the most toxic impact on staff morale was, "Failure to consider human needs." Finally, the frequency of this behavior increased with organizational status; the more senior the manager, the more abusive the behavior.

### *Summary*

We have now come full circle. Every study of managerial failure reviewed above points to "overriding personality defects" (Bentz, 1985a) as a key issue. The reason these defects matter lies in the definition of leadership—which is the ability to build, maintain, and guide a team that can outperform the competition (Hogan, 2007, pp. 34-35). The defects disrupt the interpersonal relationships needed to build a team and corrupt the judgment needed to guide its performance.

### DECONSTRUCTING BENTZ'S INSIGHT: DEFINING FLAWED INTERPERSONAL PERFORMANCE

In the early 1980s, a consensus emerged regarding the structure of normal personality. Following Goldberg (1981), this consensus is described as the Five-Factor Model (FFM) or the

Big-Five. This model reflects the structure of observer ratings and the components are defined as follows: Factor I, Surgency (or Extraversion); Factor II, Agreeableness (or Interpersonal Sensitivity); Factor III, Conscientiousness (or Prudence), Factor IV, Emotional Stability (or Adjustment); and Factor V, Openness to Experience (or Inquisitiveness) (John, 1990). The FFM is a useful way to organize research on personality and leadership (cf. Judge, Bono, Ilies, & Gerhardt, 2002). The FFM themes characterize people when they are at their best, and they define the "bright side" of personality (Hogan, Curphy, & Hogan, 1994). Personality flaws, as identified by Bentz, characterize people when they are behaving badly; they are referred to as the "dark side" of personality (Hogan & Hogan, 2001; Hogan, Raskin, & Fazzini, 1990). Both sets of characteristics are in the realm of normal personality; the dark side characteristics are undesirable in managers but do not meet clinical criteria for personality disorders.

Behaviors associated with the dark side include emotional outbursts, bullying, intimidation, arrogance, and excessive deference to authority (Furnham & Taylor, 2004). Persistently engaging in these behaviors will undermine a manager's ability to lead a high functioning team. Everyone has a bright side and a dark side, and most aspiring managers have attractive bright sides that effectively mask their dark sides.

### *The Nature of Dysfunctional Dispositions*

Dysfunctional dispositions or the "dark side" of personality (cf. Conger, 1990) erode the effectiveness of managers and executives over time (Hogan, 2007; Hogan & Hogan, 2001). There are individual differences in the degree to which these tendencies emerge in any given situation—some people are more prone to such behavior than others. Moreover, status in organizations allows people more discretion in their actions; the more discretion, the more likely that the dark side will emerge (Kaiser & Hogan, 2007).

Where do dysfunctional dispositions come from? Sigmund Freud suggested that everyone is somewhat "neurotic," i.e., plagued by fear, guilt, and anxiety caused by a child's relations with its parents in the first five years of life (Hogan & Smither, 2001). Later theorists (Alfred Adler, Karen Horney, Harry Stack Sullivan, and others) argued that people's problems reflect flawed interpersonal strategies, and that people can be best understood in terms of their expectations about how others will treat them, rather than in terms of unconscious conflicts.

Freud's claim that everyone is neurotic is empirically false (e.g., Renaud & Estes, 1961). However, the claim that early experience (in the family, school, and peer group) leaves almost everyone feeling inadequate about something is probably true. Analyses of the biographies of high-achieving managers and executives routinely identify themes of early life trauma and feelings of inadequacy (e.g., Berglas, 1986; Kaplan, Drath, & Kofodimos, 1991; Kaplan & Kaiser, in press; Kaiser & Kaplan, 2006). Thus, most people, including managers, feel insecure in certain situations, and they develop strategies for coping with these insecurities.

We encode our theories about other people in terms of "schemas" which then allow us to navigate the social environment (Fong & Markus, 1982; Kihlstrom & Klein, 1994; Markus, 1977; Sedikides, 1993; Young, Klosko, & Weishaar, 2003). Schemas function automatically and outside conscious awareness; they serve as mental filters that cause us to interpret information in ways that fit schema-relevant expectations (Baldwin, 1992); thus, schemas tend to be self-perpetuating. For example, people who were frequently criticized in childhood may develop

schemas about how criticism is inevitable in social interaction, and then interpret even innocuous feedback as criticism. To avoid being criticized, they may become perfectionistic and overly accommodating, which of course invites critique.

Dysfunctional dispositions reflect the effects of maladaptive schemas. Certain contingencies activate these schemas. First, the probability of dysfunctional behavior reflects the strength of the relevant underlying schema (Ayduk et al., 2000). Second, certain situational variables will elicit dysfunctional behavior. For example, fatigue, illness, and stress tax the mental resources needed for self-regulation and impulse control (Baumeister & Heatherton, 1996). Boredom and a lack of social vigilance is also associated with troublesome interpersonal behavior—that is, when one is "just being oneself." Dysfunctional behavior is also more likely to appear in weak or ambiguous situations (Green & Sedikides, 2001; Koch, 2002), when leaders have too much discretion (Kaiser & Hogan, 2007), or in situations that resemble those that produced the schema in the first place (Kaiser & Kaplan, 2006). Finally, dysfunctional organizational culture can elicit dysfunctional behavior (Balthazard, Cooke, & Potter, 2006; VanFleet & Griffin, 2006). Thus, personality, situational, and organizational influences interact to promote dysfunctional behaviors (cf. Tett & Burnett, 2003; Tett & Guterman, 2000).

### TAXONOMIES OF DERAILING CHARACTERISTICS

We find it convenient to distinguish between derailing behaviors and their underlying interpersonal schemas—to distinguish what people do from why they do it. This parallels the distinction in philosophy of science between prediction and explanation. We can use current behavior to predict future behavior, and we can use schemas to explain the behavior. This distinction also runs through the empirical literature. For example, derailment research based on coworker interviews and 360-degree performance ratings focuses on behavior, whereas research in the personality tradition concerns syndromes—clusters of behavioral tendencies organized by schemas (e.g., Horney, 1950).

*Behaviors Related to Derailment.* Starting with Bentz (1985a), each of the studies reviewed above provided lists of behaviors associated with bad management. These data can be used to develop a taxonomy of derailment behavior. Hogan and Warrenfeltz (2003) offer a "domain model" as a way to organize leadership competency models—which themselves define clusters of behaviors related to effectiveness. Specifically, they propose that all existing leadership competency models can be organized in terms of four broad categories as follows:

1. Intrapersonal skills: self-awareness and self-control, emotional maturity, integrity
2. Interpersonal skills: social skill, empathy, and relationship development
3. Business skills: ability to plan, organize, monitor, and use resources
4. Leadership skills: ability to build and maintain a team, lead through others

According to Hogan and Warrenfeltz (2003), this list reflects a developmental hierarchy beginning with intrapersonal skills and ending with leadership skills. Skills in each successive category build on those developed previous categories: for example, maintaining positive relationships depends on self-control, effective leadership depends on knowing something about the business, and so on. Table 2 provides a taxonomy of derailment behaviors based on this domain model.

**Table 2**  
***An Integrative Summary of Behaviors Related to Derailment in Terms of the Hogan and Warrenfeltz (2003) Domain Model***

Skill Domain <i>definition</i>	Research Study					
	Bentz (1985)	McCall & Lombardo (1983)	Morrison, White, & Van Velsor (1987)	McCauley & Lombardo (1990)	Lombardo & Eichinger (2006)	Rasch, Shen, Davies, & Bono (2008)
<b>Leadership</b> <i>ability to build and maintain a team, and lead through others</i>	Unable to build a team  Unable to delegate	Over-managing—failing to delegate  Unable to staff effectively	Can't build a team  Can't manage subordinates	Difficulty molding a staff	Failure to build a team	Over-controlling  Failure to nurture or manage talent
<b>Business</b> <i>ability to plan, organize, monitor, and use resources</i>	Unable to deal with complexity  Reactive and tactical Lacked business skills	Unable to think strategically  Specific business problems	Not Strategic  Poor results  Limited business experience	Difficulty in making strategic transition  Strategic differences with management	Lack of strategic thinking  Difficulty making tough choices  Poor administrative skills	Poor planning, organization, and/or communication Poor task performance
<b>Interpersonal</b> <i>social skill, empathy, and maintaining relationships</i>	Unable to maintain relationships	Insensitive (abrasive, intimidating, bully)  Cold, aloof, arrogant	Poor relationships	Relationship problems	Unable to deal with conflict  No interpersonal savvy  Poor political skills	Avoiding conflict and people problems  Failure to consider human needs
<b>Intrapersonal</b> <i>self-awareness and self-control, emotional maturity, integrity</i>	Lets emotions cloud judgment  Slow learner  An "overriding personality defect"	Too ambitious  Unable to adapt  Too dependent on an advocate  Betrayal of trust	Too ambitious  Unable to adapt (to a new boss, to change)  Having a "poor image"	Lack of follow-through  Too dependent on an advocate	Questionable integrity  Low self-awareness	Procrastination, time delays  Poor emotional control  Rumor-mongering, inappropriate use of information

Three points about Table 2 are worth noting. First, all of the derailment factors can be classified in terms of the domain model. Second, the number of behaviors in each domain does not necessarily reflect the importance of the domain for failure. For example, relationship problems figure prominently in derailment (McCall & Lombardo, 1983; Morrison et al., 1987; Van Velsor & Leslie, 1995) and bad leadership (Rasch, et al., 2008), but there are fewer entries for the interpersonal skills than for business skills. Third, most analyses of derailment focus on proximal causes and ignore distal causes. This is especially so in the business press. For example, Charan and Colvin (1999) argue that CEOs fail primarily due to their unwillingness to remove ineffective managers, a problem in the leadership domain. However, a deeper analysis suggests that the real cause is that failed CEOs can't admit that they have made bad staffing decisions (Berglas, 2009), a problem in the intrapersonal domain.

Derailment can almost always be traced to relationship problems (cf. Van Velsor & Leslie, 1995). When relationships are strong, people will forgive mistakes; but when relationships erode, tolerance disappears and mistakes get managers fired.

*Dark Side Personality Factors.* We used Horney's (1950) taxonomy of flawed interpersonal tendencies to organize the literature on personality and derailment. Horney later summarized her taxonomy in terms of three general themes: (1) moving away from people—managing insecurities by intimidating and avoiding others; (2) moving against people—managing self-doubts by manipulating and charming others; and (3) moving toward people—managing insecurities by ingratiating others and building alliances.

There are four published typologies of the dark side of personality (cf. Dotlich & Cairo, 2003; Hogan & Hogan, 2001; Moscosco & Salgado, 2004; Schmit, Kilm, & Robie, 2000). Table 3 shows that they all fit nicely inside Horney's categories of Moving Away, Moving Against, and Moving Toward other people. We now describe these themes in more detail using the categories described by Hogan and Hogan (2001).

### *Moving Away from People (Intimidation)*

*1. Excitable.* High Excitable people expect to be disappointed in relationships—as a result, they are alert for signs that others may treat them badly. When they think they have been mistreated, they erupt in emotional displays that may involve yelling, throwing things, and slamming doors. From the observer's perspective, that which is most distinctive about these people is their emotional eruptions; they are the people for whom the term "Emotional Intelligence" (Goleman, 1997) was devised. Because they are so volatile and unpredictable, they have difficulty building and maintaining a team—the fundamental task of leadership

At their best, these people have a great capacity for empathy; because they know that life is not always fair, they can genuinely feel others' pain. At their worst, however, they require a lot of personal attention and reassurance, and they are very hard to please.

*2. Skeptical.* High Skeptical people expect to be betrayed, cheated, or deceived in some way. They specialize in conspiracy theories, stay alert for signs of mistreatment, and when they think they detect it, they retaliate directly. This may involve physical violence, accusations, or litigation, actions announcing that they are prepared to defend themselves. From the observer's perspective, that which is most distinctive about these people is their suspiciousness, argumentativeness, and lack of trust in others.

**Table 3**  
*An Integrative Summary of Dark Side Personality Dimensions Related to Derailment*

Horney's (1950) orientation <i>Definition</i>	Source			
	Hogan & Hogan (2001)	Moscosco & Salgado (2004)	Dotlich & Cairo (2003)	Schmit, Kilm, & Robie (2000)
<b>Moving away</b>				
<i>Trying to succeed by intimidation and avoiding others</i>	Excitable	Ambivalent	Volatile	
	Skeptical	Suspicious	Distrust	Intimidating <sup>1</sup>
	Cautious	Shy	Excessive Caution	
	Reserved	Lone	Aloofness	Intimidating <sup>1</sup>
	Leisurely	Pessimistic	Passive Resistance	Passive Aggressive
<b>Moving against</b>				
<i>Trying to succeed by charm and manipulation</i>	Arrogant	Egocentric	Arrogant	Ego-centered
	Mischievous	Risky	Mischievous	Manipulation
	Colorful	Cheerful	Melodrama	
	Imaginative	Eccentric	Eccentricity	
<b>Moving toward</b>				
<i>Trying to succeed by ingratiating others and building alliances</i>	Diligent	Reliable	Perfectionism	Micro-managing
	Dutiful	Submitted	Eagerness to please	

*Note:* Scales presented in the same row are measures of the same personality dimension. <sup>1</sup>The Intimidating scale from Schmit, Kilm, & Robie (2000) blends elements of the Skeptical and Reserved dimensions from Hogan & Hogan (2001).

At their best, they are insightful about organizational politics and the motives of their counter players, and they can be the source of good intelligence regarding the real agendas of others, and the real meaning of events. At their worst, their stubbornness and inability to compromise or trust others erodes their ability to build a team.

3. *Cautious*. High Cautious persons fear being criticized, blamed, or possibly disgraced; as a result, they are constantly on guard against making mistakes that might cause them public embarrassment. To avoid criticism, they follow rules and precedents, resist innovation, and cling to that which worked in the past. Their cautiousness sometimes extends to their staff, whom they fear will embarrass them, and whom they often discourage from taking any initiative.

At their best, they are prudent and careful about evaluating risk; they rarely make rash or ill-advised moves, and they provide sound advice about intended courses of action. At their worst, however, they avoid innovation, resist change, stall, drag their feet, and are indecisive—even when it is apparent that something needs to be done.

4. *Reserved*. High Reserved people seem indifferent to the expectations of others—especially their staff. As a result, they seem formal, aloof, introverted, and lacking in social insight. They prefer to work alone, and are more interested in data and things than in people. They communicate poorly, if at all, they are unrewarding to deal with, and they have trouble building or maintaining a team.

At their best, they are tough in the face of adversity; they are unfazed by criticism, rejection, and opprobrium; they can stay focused and not be distracted by emotional upheavals, and stressful meetings. At their worst, however, they are insensitive to others needs, moods, or feelings, and can be tactless, imperceptive, and gauche.

5. *Leisurely*. High Leisurely people seem overtly pleasant and cooperative, but privately they expect to be mistreated and unappreciated. They are stubborn and independent, cynical about the talents and intentions of others—especially superiors—and insist on working at their own pace. When pressed for additional output, they tend to slow down even more. They express their resentment indirectly, in the form of procrastination and excuse making.

At their best, they have good interpersonal skills; at their worst, they are peevish and stubborn, they focus on their own agendas, and refuse to support their colleagues and subordinates. Their prickly sensitivity, subtle uncooperativeness, and stubbornness make them unrewarding to deal with.

#### *Moving Against People (Manipulation)*

6. *Arrogant*. High Arrogant people expect to be admired, praised, indulged, and obeyed. They expect to be successful in everything they do, they believe in their own legacy, and when their expectations are frustrated, they explode with "narcissistic rage". From the observer's perspective, that which is most distinctive about these people is their self-assurance which often gives them a certain social presence—they are the first to speak in a group, and they do so with great confidence, even when they are wrong.

At their best, these people are energetic, charismatic, leader-like, and willing to take the

initiative to get projects moving. They are fearless about taking on any task and some elevation on this characteristic is needed for success in management, sales, and entrepreneurship. At their worst, they are arrogant, demanding, self-deceived, and pompous. Because they are so confident and aspirational, they often attract followers. But they take more credit for success than is warranted; they refuse to acknowledge failure, errors, or mistakes; they are unable to learn from experience; and, ultimately, they alienate their colleagues and subordinates.

7. *Mischievous*. High Mischievous people expect other people will find them

charming, clever, even irresistible—as a result, they are willing to ask for favors, exceptions, allowances, and to do so without incurring obligations. Also, they see themselves as bullet proof, they enjoy risk taking for its own sake, and they often live on the edge. From the observer's perspective, that which is most distinctive about these people is that they are bright, witty, and engaging, which is why they are able to extract favors, promises, money, and resources from other people with relative ease. They see others as utilities to be exploited, and therefore have problems maintaining commitments, and are unconcerned about violating expectations.

At their best they are self-confident and have an air of daring that others often find attractive and even intriguing. At their worst, they are impulsive, reckless, faithless, exploitative, and manipulative. Their self-confidence and recklessness lead to many mistakes but they seem unable to learn from experience; as a result, they tend to be underachievers, relative to their talent and capabilities.

8. *Colorful*. High Colorful people expect others will find them attractive and entertaining, and the natural focus of attention. They are good at calling attention to themselves—they know how to make dramatic entrances and exits, they carry themselves with flair, wear attention grabbing clothes, and are constantly on stage. Some elevation on this characteristic is essential for a career in sales, politics, or the theater. From an observer's perspective, what is most distinctive about these people is their stage presence—they perform well in interviews, in assessment centers, and other public settings. They are also impulsive and unpredictable; that which makes them good at sales (and selling themselves) makes them poor managers—they are unfocused, distractible, over-committed, and always in search of the spotlight.

At their best, they are bright, entertaining, flirtatious, and the life of the party. At their worst, they won't listen or plan, they self-nominate and over-commit themselves. Although they are entertaining, they are also easily distracted, impulsive, hyperactive, and unproductive.

9. *Imaginative*. High Imaginative people think about the world in different and often interesting ways, and they enjoy entertaining others with their unusual perceptions and insights. They are alert to new ways of seeing, thinking, and expressing themselves, and they enjoy the reactions they elicit in others with their unexpected forms of self-expression. From the observer's perspective, these people often seem bright, insightful, playful, and innovative, but also as eccentric, odd, and flighty.

At their best, these people are visionary, creative, and insightful. At their worst, they can be self-absorbed, insensitive to feedback, and indifferent to the social and political consequences of their egocentric focus on their own agendas. They communicate poorly, and as managers, they often leave people confused regarding their directions or intentions.

### *Moving Toward People (Ingratiation)*

*10. Diligent.* High Diligent people expect their performance to be rigorously evaluated. As a result, they have high standards of performance for themselves and others; they are concerned with doing a good job, being a good citizen, and pleasing authority. When they think they have not lived up to their standards, they redouble their efforts and try even harder. They are hard working, careful, and planful; they live by the rules and expect others to do so too, and become irritable when others don't follow their rules. From the observer's perspective, that which is most distinctive about these people is their conservatism, their detail orientation, their risk aversion, but also the degree to which they are steady, dependable, and predictable. They are model organizational citizens who can be relied upon to maintain standards, do their work competently and professionally, and treat their colleagues with respect.

At their best, these people are good role models who uphold the highest standards of professionalism in performance and comportment; they are typically popular with their bosses because they are so reliable. At their worst, however, they are fussy, particular, nit-picking micro-managers who deprive their subordinates of any choice or control over their work. The micro-management alienates their staff who soon refuse to take any initiative and simply wait to be told what to do and how to do it.

*11. Dutiful.* High Dutiful people think others expect them to behave well. As a result, they are concerned about being accepted, being liked, and getting along, especially with authority figures. They are alert for signs of disapproval, and equally alert for opportunities to ingratiate themselves, to be of service, to demonstrate their fealty and loyalty to the organization. When they think they have given offense, they redouble their efforts to be model citizens. From the observer's perspective, that which is most distinctive about these people is their good nature, their politeness, their cordiality, and their indecisiveness. As managers, they will do anything their boss requires; this means that they are reluctant to support their staff or challenge authority, and this inevitably erodes their legitimacy as leaders.

At their best, these people are polite, conforming, and eager to please. Because they are so agreeable, because they seldom criticize anyone, complain about anything, or threaten anybody, they rarely make enemies and tend to rise in organizations. But they have problems making decisions, taking initiative, or taking stands; consequently, the units for which they are responsible tend to drift, their staff feels unsupported, and they have trouble maintaining a team.

## MITIGATING AND PREVENTING DERAILMENT

Although bad management is widespread, it is to a degree preventable. Specifically, the research suggests that derailment can be minimized through closer attention to the problem in selection, development, and job transitions (cf. Gabbaro, 1987; Hellervik, Hazucha, & Schneider, 1992; Lombardo & Eichinger, 1999; McCauley & Lombardo, 1990; Watkins, 2003).

### *Selection*

There are two challenges in trying to minimize derailment through selection. First, derailed executives resemble successful executives. Typically both groups are bright and ambitious, with good technical and problem-solving skills and successful track records, and are identified early

as "high potential" (Lombardo & Eichinger, 1999; McCall & Lombardo, 1983). In addition, successful managers are not perfect; they all have flaws and have experienced career set-backs. Consequently, it is often hard to pick the winners with ordinary background information.

Nonetheless, certain characteristics reliably distinguish successful from unsuccessful executives. Failed managers are less self-aware, have inflated self-evaluations, easily lose their composure, handle mistakes defensively, are unable to learn from experience, and have had a less varied history of job assignments (Eichinger & Lombardo, 2003; Lombardo & Eichinger, 2006; McCall & Lombardo, 1983; Shipper & Dillard, 2000). Assessing these qualities may identify problem candidates. Additionally, executive selection rarely involves personality testing (Sessa, Kaiser, Taylor, & Campbell, 1998), and when it does, it typically focuses on bright side characteristics. Thus, assessing dark side characteristics could help identify derailment potential (cf. Khoo & Burch, 2008; Knights & Kennedy, 2007).

The second problem with trying to minimize derailment through selection is that there are not enough good managers to go around. The base rate for managerial incompetence is about fifty percent and the management talent pool is shrinking. Selection can help improve talent up to a point; after that, organizations have to survive with the managers they have, which points to the importance of development.

### *Development*

The key to development is self-awareness (Hogan & Warrenfeltz, 2003; Kaiser & Kaplan, 2006; Mintzberg, 2004). Eichinger and Lombardo (2003) found that managers whose self-ratings were higher than the ratings from coworkers were more likely to fail. Shipper and Dillard (2000) found that managers who were about to derail were more likely to recover to the extent that their evaluations of their own skills matched those provided by coworkers. Similarly, Kovach (1989) reports that derailed managers can recover if they are able honestly to evaluate their performance and learn from the failure. However, self-awareness alone is not sufficient; flawed managers must also improve their skills at self-regulation and social interaction.

*Self-awareness.* Managers need to develop self-awareness in two areas: (1) how others perceive them; and (2) their dark side tendencies. Coworker feedback is the most efficient way to help managers understand how their behavior is perceived. Most *Fortune 1000* corporations and many medium and small companies, non-profits, and government agencies use a 360-degree feedback process, which compares performance ratings provided by superiors, peers, and subordinates with self-ratings. The peer and subordinate information is crucial because they are the people most exposed to the behaviors associated with derailment.

Meta-analyses of the feedback literature indicates that it enhances self-awareness and promotes desirable behavior change, although the overall effects are moderate- to small in magnitude (Kluger & DeNisi, 1996; Smither, London, & Reilly, 2005). The overall effects are diluted by poor feedback interventions which actually degrade performance (Kluger & DeNisi, 1996). However, feedback usually leads to positive results, and certain conditions are more conducive. Feedback is most effective in improving performance: (a) for the lowest rated managers; (b) when coaches help managers review their feedback and set specific improvement goals; and (c) when managers share their development plans with coworkers and ask for

suggestions (Smither, London, Flautt, Vargas, & Kucine, 2003; Smither, London, Reilly, Flautt, Vargas, & Kucine, 2004). Supplementing feedback ratings with written comments also improves performance, especially when the comments focus on negative behaviors (Smither & Walker, 2004).

The standard 360-degree feedback process could be improved in two ways. First, 360 surveys typically assess factors associated with success (Leslie & Fleenor, 1998)—the "right stuff." But the literature shows that failure is often due to having the "wrong stuff" rather than lacking the "right stuff" (Lombardo et al., 1988); thus, 360 surveys need to assess both desirable and undesirable factors (cf., Lombardo & Eichinger, 2006; Lombardo & McCauley, 1994). Second, the literature shows that overusing strengths—*too much* of the "right stuff"—is also a problem (Kaiser & Kaplan, 2009; Kaplan & Kaiser, 2009; Lombardo & Eichinger, 2006; McCall & Lombardo, 1983; McCall, 1998). Because 360 rating forms typically assume higher scores are better, they could be enhanced by taking into consideration the overuse of strengths (Kaiser & Kaplan, 2006; Kaplan & Kaiser, 2006).

Second, managers also need to understand their dark side tendencies, which can be assessed using competent psychometric tests and are less resource-intensive than the 360 process. However, few psychometric tests focus on the dark side and the well-known inventories that assess dysfunctional tendencies are not appropriate in the workplace (e.g., the Minnesota Multiphasic Inventory; Hathaway & McKinley, 1943). A few inventories constructed for use in the workplace (e.g., Hogan & Hogan, 1997, 2008; Moscosco & Salgado, 2000) can provide managers with insight into counterproductive dispositions (Hogan & Hogan, 2001).

*Intrapersonal skills.* As noted above, self-awareness is a necessary but insufficient condition for development. As Freud suggested, insight merely transforms clueless neurotics into enlightened neurotics. Moreover, development efforts focusing on behavior rarely deal with the cognitive, emotional, and motivational causes of the behavior. Behavioral approaches to mitigating derailment are limited because they do not improve the *intrapersonal skills* needed to regulate the impulses and emotional reactions that can degrade performance in the interpersonal, business, and leadership domains (Hogan & Warrenfeltz, 2003; Kaiser & Kaplan, 2006). It is important to go beyond behavior to identify the causes of flawed performance.

Methods for helping managers develop intrapersonal skills have six features in common (e.g., Davies, 2009; Kaiser & Kaplan, 2006; Kegan & Lahey, 2001; Kilburg, 2000). First, they begin with competent assessments and are facilitated by coaches. Second, they help managers identify their implicit theories of social interaction and desired personal goals. Third, they focus on the faulty assumptions, emotional hot-buttons, and self-defeating schemas of which the managers are usually unaware. Fourth, they show how the self-defeating schemas may have been adaptive in the context in which they were developed, but are no longer adaptive. Fifth, they reprogram the faulty schemas and replace the associated counterproductive behaviors with more constructive behavioral alternatives. Finally, these methods address the difficulty of changing habitual behavior. Change is also difficult because derailed managers are often self-absorbed, unwilling to take responsibility for their shortcomings, and unable to learn from their mistakes—factors that make them resistant to feedback and development.

Personalized coaching is probably more effective for preventing derailment than

leadership development training programs because such programs focus on training leadership and business skills (Burke & Day, 1986; Csoka, 1997) rather than the interpersonal and intrapersonal deficits at the root of derailment (Kaiser & Kaplan, 2006). Second, these programs rely on subjective reactions for evaluation ("smile sheets;" Goldsetin & Ford, 2002), focus on positive themes, and neglect derailment and dysfunctional behavior—they try to improve the "right stuff" rather than ameliorate the "wrong stuff." The faddish enthusiasm on maximizing strengths rather than fixing weaknesses is a good example of this bias toward the positive (Kaiser, 2009). However, increasing public awareness of corporate malfeasance, high-level derailments, and a global financial crisis have raised concerns about the dark side of leadership.

### *Transition Management*

McCall and Lombardo (1983, p. 11) noted that the causes of derailment are "all connected to the fact that situations change as one ascends the organizational hierarchy." Others have also observed that most derailment occurs after a transition to a more senior job (cf. Gentry & Chappelow, 2009; Kovach, 1989; Watkins, 2003). Promotion brings more responsibility and scrutiny, more ambiguous performance expectations, and more complex politics (Zaccaro, 2001). Further, senior jobs require a strategic perspective and the ability to build coalitions, negotiate, delegate, empower, and use more participative decision making to accomplish goals (Charan, Drotter, & Noel, 2001; Kaiser, Craig, Overfield, & Yarborough, 2009).

As managers are promoted, strengths can become liabilities and weaknesses that might not have mattered become important (McCall & Lombardo, 1983). Research suggests that executives need three to six months to adjust to a new job (Gabbaro, 1987; Watkins, 2003; Downey, March, & Berkman, 2001), which adds to the stress level. Further, increased status diminishes the ability to appreciate another person's perspective (Galinski, Magee, Inesi, & Gruenfeld, 2006). All this can catalyze dark side tendencies and undermine social performance and key relationships. When the stakes are highest, executives may be at their worst (Kaiser & Hogan, 2007).

Organizations rarely prepare managers for promotion or support them afterwards (Freedman, 2005; Watkins, 2003). However, an increased focus on talent management and retention has produced methods for facilitating transitions, based on experience at American Express, General Electric, Johnson & Johnson, Pfizer, Pitney-Bowes, and Wal-Mart (e.g., Downey et al., 2001; Vollhardt, 2005; Watkins, 2003). Anecdotal evidence suggests that onboarding programs and transition coaching (Witherspoon & Cannon, 2004) can reduce the failure rate of managers and decrease the time needed for them to adjust to a new job.

*Preparation.* Transition management takes place in two phases: (a) preparation for and (b) integration into the new role. Preparation involves creating a plan based on a realistic job preview, assessing risk factors, and building a relationship with the new boss. A realistic job preview helps the new manager understand the new job (Popovich & Wanous, 1982). It is important to evaluate the context of the new assignment; for instance, start-ups, turnarounds, realignments, and sustaining situations require different approaches (Watkins, 2003). Risk factors can be determined by comparing the new manager's personality, skill, and experience profile with the demands of the new job. Special attention should be paid to strengths that could become liabilities (e.g., a reliance on technical skills) and seemingly innocuous weaknesses that

could become liabilities (e.g., a narrow range of experience and limited perspective).

Freedman (2005) suggests that newly promoted executives need to let go of tactical details and technical problem solving, and adopt a big picture perspective, prioritize strategically, and learn team-based decision making. Freedman provides a practical model for helping managers change behaviors that were previously successful and replace them with more appropriate behaviors while also managing the internal issues of emotion and identity that often produce stress and anxiety.

*Integration.* The most important part of a successful transition is dealing with a new boss. There are few general rules for doing this because it depends on the personalities of the parties involved. Introverted managers have more trouble than extraverts with this and it is a risk factor for their derailment (Bauer, Erdogan, Liden, & Wayne, 2006). In the practitioner literature, best practices include setting expectations and regularly clarifying them, developing mechanisms for monitoring progress, and learning to navigate the political landscape (Gabbaro, 1987; Watkins, 2003).

In addition to developing a relationship with new bosses, executives need to establish good relations with subordinates and to form alliances with peers in other parts of the organization (Downey et al., 2001; Gabarro, 1987; Vollhardt, 2005; Watkins, 2003). A study by Right Management Consultants (reported in Fisher, 2005) found that 61% of new hires who failed to build relationships with peers and subordinates subsequently derailed.

Failure usually involves a build up of little problems that eventually reach a critical mass (Lombardo & Eichinger, 1999; McCall & Lombardo, 1983). Table 4 presents common signs of derailment potential organized in terms of the Hogan and Warrenfeltz (2003) domain model. Organizations can minimize derailment by periodically evaluating whether managers-in-transition are having problems with business and leadership performance, working relationships, and self-management, then intervening before it is too late.

## CONCLUSIONS

Historically, the leadership literature has been little more than a hymn in praise of the corporate elite (e.g., Charan, 2007). At a professional conference in the early 1980s, the authors proposed that the base rate of bad management was about 50%, and they met fierce resistance from psychologists in the leadership development industry. Nonetheless, we persisted, Bentz published his data on failed managers at Sears, systematic research soon followed, and the phenomenon is increasingly recognized as important.

The essence of this chapter can be summarized in terms of four points. First, the academic literature on leadership leads to few useful generalizations about the distinguishing characteristics of good leaders. Fiedler's (1967) work is a metaphor for the field—namely, the defining features of good leadership depend on "the situation" and this leaves practitioners with little clear guidance about how to help managers.

Second, research on the characteristics of bad leaders converges quite nicely. The behaviors associated with managerial derailment are well documented and are relevant to most organizations and most managers. Being unable to get along with coworkers is a key reason

managers fail. The dark side personality factors help explain why managers have these relationship problems. The derailment research also points to the role of change, stress, and a lack of self-awareness as potentiating factors. The research leads to some useful generalizations, offers taxonomies of causes and early warning signals, and remedial recommendations.

Third, the data are quite clear that there are a large number of bad managers in the private and public sector. Estimates of the base rate of bad managers have been surprisingly consistent since research on this topic first started; the problem is real and worthy of serious research attention.

Finally, if organizations observe the principles of good management, including how they manage their managers, then they are more profitable. When organizations ignore the principles of good management, they are less profitable, and they subject their employees to unnecessary stress and abuse.

Table 4  
*Identifying Potential for Derailment*

<p>Leadership Domain</p> <p>Trouble Building and Maintaining a Team</p> <p><i>Micromanagement, doesn't delegate or empower</i></p> <p><i>Authoritarian and autocratic</i></p> <p><i>Inability to motivate and develop subordinates</i></p> <p><i>Poor team morale, high turnover</i></p> <p><i>Poor staffing decisions</i></p>
<p>Business Domain</p> <p>Narrow Perspective/Not Strategic</p> <p><i>Overwhelmed by business complexity</i></p> <p><i>Consumed with details and meetings</i></p> <p><i>Too reliant on technical skills</i></p> <p><i>Unable to prioritize</i></p>
<p>Interpersonal Domain</p> <p>Poor Working Relationships</p> <p><i>Insensitive, abrasive, and abusive</i></p> <p><i>People avoid working with the person</i></p> <p><i>Blaming others for problems</i></p> <p><i>Frequent political missteps</i></p>
<p>Intrapersonal Domain</p> <p>Inappropriate or Immature Behavior</p> <p><i>Outbursts, over-reacting and losing composure</i></p> <p><i>Doubtful integrity, loyalty, and sincerity</i></p> <p><i>Unable to handle stress</i></p> <p><i>Unable to accept responsibility for problems</i></p> <p><i>Gossiping and rumor mongering</i></p> <p><i>Exchanging information inappropriately</i></p>

*Note.* Based on a literature review reported in DeVries, D. L. & Kaiser, R. B. (2003, November). *Going sour in the suite: What you can do about executive derailment*. Workshop sponsored by the Human Resources Planning Society, Miami, FL.

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