Can you Spot the "I" Managers in your organization?

As a HR and Leadership consultant, I have often been intrigued by the fact that organizations seldom take a holistic view of both, technical and behavioral competence while promoting individuals to responsible managerial positions. The technical competence takes precedence over behavioral competence and as a result, you and I have often endured self-centered, rude, behaviorally incompetent managers skilled in organizational politics and 'upward flattery'.

The problem becomes more pronounced when these managers assume leadership positions in organizations which provide them the necessary immunity from criticism and feedback in an environment that is characterized by mediocrity, mistrust and cut-throat politics. The worst happens when they start cascading these negative behaviors to lower levels of the organization as indicators of "success". Displaying a broad spectrum of negative "I" behaviors at the workplace, these managers thrive and continue to "kill" the organization day by day while we look on mutely, unable to react or revolt!

It's very easy to spot these *behaviorally incompetent ("I")* managers in an organization as most of them are guilty on a daily basis of displaying the following dysfunctional "I" behaviors –

1) **Intimidating.** Working for a rude and intimidating manager is anybody's worst nightmare. These behaviorally incompetent managers regularly bully, ridicule and embarrass their juniors in public. Forever scared of their over inflated ego being hurt, their usual managerial style is Coercion.
2) **Inconsistency.** The inability to 'walk the talk' and the inability to instill trust amongst juniors in an organization is an important characteristic of inconsistent managers. For them the words accountability and responsibility do not exist. Either they avoid taking responsibility or they're quick to blame others for their mistakes. They lack integrity, objectivity and transparency – their inconsistent actions and words amply prove it.
3) **Insecurity.** The fear of losing his/her position to a more deserving candidate stalks a behaviorally incompetent manager night and day. This insecurity makes them reluctant to give up control for fear of being 'exposed'. Thus, they 'micro manage' and promote incompetence and mediocrity as opposed to promoting a culture of meritocracy and empowerment.
4) **Inflexibility.** The inability and unwillingness to seek different perspectives and resistance to change is a major dysfunctional behavioral trait of incompetent managers. Having an arrogant, know-all attitude, such managers' focus intensely on protecting their familiar 'turf' from unwanted changes and therefore, thrive on rigid policies and procedures in a culture of bureaucracy and submissiveness. They are quick to "kill" new ideas and

alternatives, very often threatening the basic survival of an organization in the current dynamic environment.

5) **Ingratitude.** Praising juniors for their performance and achievements is an alien concept for a self-centered manager. He displays megalomaniac tendencies and is forever striving to take credit for the successes and positive accomplishments of his team members. Of course, they are equally as quick to pass on the blame employees when something goes wrong.

6) **Ignorance.** Behaviorally incompetent managers seldom realize the needs and aspirations of their juniors at the workplace. They are very focused on protecting their self interests and ignore even the basic expectations that their team members may have from them in terms of well-being, support and development at the workplace.

7) **Incommunicative.** It's very frustrating to work for a manager who does not communicate with his/her colleagues and subordinates. Poor managers communicate with assumptions, generalities, lack of direction, and impatience. Their listening skills are poor and they demonstrate negative body language that discourages others to communicate freely with them. Incommunicative managers often prefer to be isolated in their ivory towers and prefer to communicate with their juniors through terse emails and memos.

8) **Indecisive.** "Analysis-paralysis" plagues the behaviorally incompetent manager. They lack a sense of urgency and won't take initiative, even on matters that are critical to the organization. They strongly believe that given enough time, the urgency of action is often diffused and are totally unconcerned about the fact that their procrastination may be holding up projects which involve multiple stakeholders. They're easily distracted, unreliable and erratic. Of course, they are quick to transfer blame to others if things go wrong due to their inability to take a stand.

9) **Inconsiderate.** Being inconsiderate comes easily to a behaviorally incompetent manager. They are oblivious of the feelings and emotions of others. They lack empathy and are not concerned about the well being and work life balance of their juniors. They allocate work disproportionately and put unrealistic timelines for delivery. Their disciplinary measures are inappropriate and often meted out in public and focused on the individual rather on his/her behavior or actions. They nurture favoritism and sycophancy at the cost of performance and potential. And finally,

10) **Indifferent.** Indifferent managers abound in organizations. They are unconcerned about the aspirations and achievements of their team members. Instead of motivating people, they are constantly criticizing and demotivating them. They ignore the development needs of their team members, probably because they feel threatened by skilled and competent people around them. Their pessimistic attitude and lack of enthusiasm creates a "don't care' low performing work environment where negativity abounds.

So what would you do when you spot a behaviorally incompetent manager who is unenthusiastic, insensitive, negative in his approach, highly insecure and defensive? How do make him aware of his

dysfunctional behavior? How do you effect a positive change in these mangers that is ultimately beneficial to the organization?

Funnily, I know a lot of CEOs and senior leaders who are not overly concerned about this. Behavior competence takes a back seat compared to business results – a very 'myopic' philosophy! You decide!

Would you rather 'speak up' and risk your comfortable organizational cocoon or 'die' a slow and painful death each day along with the organization?

To be, or not to be, — that is the question ….
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,
And by opposing end them?

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE, Hamlet, Act III, scene I