

# What HBO's 'Succession' Can Teach Us About Exceptional Leadership

Ever wondered what could go wrong in leadership? HBO's *Succession* is practically a masterclass on the subject. This gripping tale focuses on the Roy family, led by the cunning patriarch Logan Roy. His children could easily fill the roster for 'Leadership Don'ts 101.' The show deeply resonated with me, offering a trove of cautionary tales on how not to lead. Let's delve into some of these eye-opening lessons.

## The Self-Absorbed Leader

In HBO's "*Succession*," the Roy family members are so wrapped up in themselves that they don't see past their reflection. This trait sharply contrasts with what Jim Collins espouses in his book, *Good to Great*, "Leaders look out the window to apportion credit to factors outside themselves when things go well. And when things go poorly, they look in the mirror and say, 'I'm responsible.'"

- *Quick Tip:* Exceptional leaders are selfless. They recognize that their role is serving others— their team, shareholders, or customers. The credit for success is shared, and responsibility for setbacks is owned.

## The Ambition Trap

Ambition can fuel the rise of great leaders. However, as Napoleon Bonaparte stated, "Great ambition is the passion of great character. Those endowed with it may perform very good or very bad acts." The Roy's demonstrate the darker aspects of ambition, which are motivated solely by personal gain.

- *Quick Tip:* Balanced ambition, on the other hand, is channeled toward goals that benefit not just the individual but the entire team and organization. When you leverage ambition for collective achievement, you truly lead.

## **A Cautionary Tale of Dysfunction**

The Roy family could easily be a case study in Patrick Lencioni's "The Five Dysfunctions of a Team," which pinpoints the issues of an absence of trust, fear of conflict, lack of commitment, avoidance of accountability, and inattention to results. The Roy's embody all these dysfunctions, often all in one episode.

- *Quick Tip:* High-performing teams are built on a foundation of trust, embrace healthy conflict, show commitment to decisions, hold each other accountable, and focus keenly on achieving results. Leaders should aim to cultivate these positive traits within their teams.

## **The Lure of Expedience**

Tom Wambsgans, the bootlicking in-law, personifies expediency. He lives by what Martin Luther King, Jr. warned against: "Cowardice asks the question, is it safe? Expediency asks the question, is it politic? Vanity asks the question, is it popular? But conscience asks the question, is it right? And there comes a time when one must take a position that is neither safe, nor politic, nor popular, but one must take it because it is right."

- *Quick Tip:* Exceptional leaders choose the right course of action, even when it's the path of most resistance. They weigh their decisions carefully and act in line

with their ethical principles.

## **The Illusion of Alignment**

In the climax of “Succession,” the Roy siblings demonstrate that being in the same room doesn’t mean you’re on the same page. Real alignment is about shared values and unified objectives.

- *Quick Tip:* Consistently communicating your organization’s purpose, vision, and mission keeps everyone aligned. When a team understands how their individual contributions ladder up to the larger goals, it fosters a powerful sense of unity.

“Succession” isn’t just a cautionary tale but a vivid lesson on what not to embody as a leader. So, the next time you’re at a leadership juncture, consider asking yourself, “What would the Roy’s do?” Then, do the opposite. Ready to be the leader you were meant to be? Your team isn’t just waiting; they’re craving the exceptional leader you can be.

Want to become an exceptional leader? Visit my website, <http://www.prestonpoore.com>, today!

Cheers!

Preston