

WHITE PAPER

First-Time Leaders

How 'darkside tendencies' can
impact on their reputation



Executive Summary

- First-time leaders deal with a number of challenges and transitions which can be quite taxing and may put them at increased risk of engaging in counterproductive work behaviours (also referred to as 'dark side tendencies'). Engaging in 'dark side tendencies' may impact on the reputation of first-time leaders, which could have subsequent implications for their career and effectiveness as a leader as well as implications for their teams and their organisation. The current research does in fact suggest that first-time leaders who are at a higher risk of displaying certain 'dark side tendencies' are likely to experience a detrimental impact on their reputations as measured by multi-rater feedback.
- Not all 'dark side tendencies' are likely to be equal in their impact on the reputation of first-time leaders. Tendencies associated with being Sceptical (i.e. cynical, defensive and mistrustful) and Reserved (i.e. uncommunicative, withdrawn and indifferent to others' feelings) appear to be particularly detrimental for the reputation of first-time leaders. The impact of other 'dark side tendencies' such as those associated with being Cautious (i.e. risk-averse, unassertive, self-doubting and concerned about being criticised) appears to be more limited.
- Providing first-time leaders with a greater understanding of their likelihood to engage in certain 'dark side tendencies' and how to mitigate the risks associated with these tendencies may help enhance their leadership success. Development recommendations are provided in this whitepaper for specific 'dark side tendencies' that appear to have an impact on the reputation of first-time leaders.

Background

First-time leaders have to deal with a number of challenges and transitions that require learning new skills, adopting new attitudes, and developing self-awareness (Benjamin & O'Reilly, 2011; Plankhotnik, Rocco & Roberts, 2011). These challenges and transitions include:

- Moving from an individual-contributor mindset to a leadership-mindset
- Managing and motivating others including dealing with poor performance
- Negotiating new relationships and renegotiating existing relationships

The demands associated with transitioning into a leadership role can be quite taxing (Benjamin & O'Reilly, 2011) and this may place first-time leaders at an increased risk of engaging in 'dark side tendencies'. 'Dark side tendencies' (also known as derailers) are counterproductive behaviours that can have a negative impact on an individual's performance and relationships at work (Hogan & Hogan, 2009). Engaging in 'dark side tendencies' may also have important implications for the reputation that first-time leaders establish for themselves.

Understanding the impact of 'dark side tendencies' on the reputation of first-time leaders is important as reputation has been found to have strong and lasting effects that impact access to subsequent opportunities (Benjamin & O'Reilly, 2011; Wayne et al., 1997). Reputation has also been found to be related to factors such as:

- Career success, level of power and autonomy (Zinko et al., 2012)
- Level of trust and accountability (Hall et al., 2004)
- Amount of compensation and power (Wade et al., 2006)

While previous research has provided insight into some of the challenges and transitions that first-time leaders often face, there is a lack of research examining the impact of 'dark side tendencies' during this period, particularly on their reputation. Therefore, the following research explores how certain 'dark side tendencies' can have an impact on the reputation of first-time leaders as measured by a multi-rater feedback tool.

This Research

Participants

Data was analysed for a sample of 470 individuals in lower-level management positions. The data was from a global database collected between 2012 and 2015. Leaders in the sample had personality data and multi-rater feedback data captured at the same time in their careers. The total number of ratings compiled from the multi-rater feedback tool for the sample of leaders was 4497, and this incorporated feedback from the following rater groups:

- Managers
- Peers
- Reports
- Others (e.g., customers, stakeholders)

While the demographic information available was limited, the leaders came from private, public and not-for-profit sectors across a large range of industries including (but not limited to) Banking and Finance, Building and Construction, Education, Healthcare and Medical, Hospitality, IT and Telecommunications, Professional Services, and Sales and Marketing.

Measures

Hogan 360

Ratees in this study participated in a multi-rater feedback process using the Hogan 360 (Peter Berry Consultancy, 2015). The Hogan 360 is an online multi-rater assessment tool that gathers leadership feedback from a variety of key stakeholder groups. The tool is supported by research that demonstrates its reliability and validity (Peter Berry Consultancy, 2015).

As shown in Figure 1 below, the tool covers four key domains.



Figure 1: The Hogan 360° Leadership Model

This Research cont.

Each of the four Hogan 360 leadership model domains are defined below, each containing two to four competencies.

- **Self-Management:** being self-aware, self-regulating and able to manage stress; being transparent and authentic. Competencies include Integrity and Resilience.
- **Relationship Management:** achieving better results through better relationships. Competencies include Communication, People Skills, Team Player and Customer.
- **Working in the Business:** having the experience, ability and momentum to consistently deliver great results. Competencies include Capability, Efficiency, Results and Engaging.
- **Working on the Business:** adding extra value through innovation and strategic planning, and building motivated accountable teams. Competencies include Accountability, Motivation, Strategy and Innovation.

Ratees received ratings on 50 items using a 1 to 7 scale (1 = Does not describe this person at all, 7 = Describes this person exactly). Raters were classified as Managers, Peers, Reports or Others. Ratees also rated themselves.

Hogan Development Survey (HDS)

The Hogan Development Survey (HDS; Hogan & Hogan, 2009) measures personality when under stress and pressure, and assesses individuals' strengths which, when overplayed, can potentially derail performance. The HDS consists of 11 scales with higher scores indicating a higher risk of engaging in the counterproductive 'dark side' behaviours associated with that scale.

Statistical Analyses

Analyses of variance were carried out to assess whether there was a relationship between the leaders' results on the HDS and their results on the Hogan 360. Pairwise comparisons were also conducted to further explore differences based on the leaders' level of risk on the HDS and their results on the Hogan 360. The level of statistical significance used to assess for differences was Bonferroni-adjusted based on a significance level of $p < .05$. This process was conducted to ensure only statistically valid and meaningful differences were identified.

Research Findings

Self-Management

Self-Management refers to personal awareness, self-regulation, stress management, resilience, transparency, and authenticity (Peter Berry Consultancy, 2015). Most of the HDS scales (except for Colourful and Dutiful) were associated with significant differences in Self-Management and its underlying competencies Integrity and Resilience. Further analyses revealed that individuals classed as being at a higher risk of displaying the following 'dark side tendencies' had significantly *lower* overall Self-Management scores:

- Excitable: temperamental, easily disappointed and inclined to overreact to difficult situations
- Sceptical: cynical, defensive, sensitive to criticism and inclined to hold grudges
- Reserved: withdrawn, aloof, uncommunicative and indifferent to others' feelings
- Bold: overly self-confident, entitled, self-promoting, demanding and overbearing
- Mischievous: impulsive, risk-taking, limit-testing and manipulative

Findings by **Self-Management** competencies are described below.

Integrity refers to serving as a role model for the organisation's values in relation to treating employees with respect and equity (Peter Berry Consultancy, 2015). Analyses revealed that individuals classed as being at a higher risk of displaying the following 'dark side tendencies' had significantly *lower* Integrity scores:

- Sceptical: cynical, defensive, sensitive to criticism and inclined to hold grudges
- Reserved: withdrawn, aloof, uncommunicative and indifferent to others' feelings
- Mischievous: impulsive, risk-taking, limit-testing and manipulative

Resilience refers to maintaining emotional maturity even in stressful situations and spending time reflecting on personal improvement opportunities (Peter Berry Consultancy, 2015). Analyses revealed that individuals classed as being at a higher risk of displaying the following 'dark side tendencies' had significantly *lower* Resilience scores:

- Excitable: temperamental, easily disappointed and inclined to overreact to difficult situations
- Sceptical: cynical, defensive, sensitive to criticism and inclined to hold grudges
- Reserved: withdrawn, aloof, uncommunicative and indifferent to others' feelings

Table 1. HDS scales associated with significantly lower scores on the competencies underlying Self-Management

	Integrity	Resilience
Excitable		✓
Sceptical	✓	✓
Reserved	✓	✓
Mischievous	✓	

Research Findings cont.

Working on the Business

Working on the Business refers to adding extra value through innovation and strategic planning and building motivated, accountable teams (Peter Berry Consultancy, 2015). Most of the HDS scales (except for Excitable, Imaginative and Dutiful) were associated with significant differences in Working on the Business and its underlying competencies Accountability, Motivation, Strategy and Innovation. Further analyses revealed that individuals classed as being at a higher risk of displaying the following ‘dark side tendencies’ had significantly *lower* overall Working on the Business scores:

- Sceptical: cynical, defensive, sensitive to criticism and inclined to hold grudges
- Reserved: withdrawn, aloof, uncommunicative and indifferent to others’ feelings

Findings by **Working on the Business** are described below.

Accountability refers to managing performance by providing consistent and constructive feedback (Peter Berry Consultancy, 2015). Analyses revealed that individuals classed as being at a higher risk of displaying the following ‘dark side tendencies’ had significantly *lower* Accountability scores:

- Cautious: risk-averse, unassertive, self-doubting and concerned about being criticised
- Reserved: withdrawn, aloof, uncommunicative and indifferent to others’ feelings

Motivation refers to creating a work environment that allows everyone to become engaged (Peter Berry Consultancy, 2015). Analyses revealed that individuals classed as being at a higher risk of displaying the following ‘dark side tendencies’ had significantly *lower* Motivation scores:

- Sceptical: cynical, defensive, sensitive to criticism and inclined to hold grudges
- Reserved: withdrawn, aloof, uncommunicative and indifferent to others’ feelings
- Bold: overly self-confident, entitled, self-promoting, demanding and overbearing

Strategy refers to spending time thinking long-term and sharing vision with others (Peter Berry Consultancy, 2015). Analyses revealed that for each of the HDS scales examined, being classed as at a higher risk of displaying the associated ‘dark side tendencies’ was not associated with significantly *lower* Strategy scores.

Innovation refers to suggesting and supporting ideas that improve processes and deliverables (Peter Berry Consultancy, 2015). Analyses revealed that individuals classed as being at a higher risk of displaying the following ‘dark side tendencies’ had significantly *lower* Innovation scores:

- Sceptical: cynical, defensive, sensitive to criticism and inclined to hold grudges

Table 4. HDS scales associated with significantly lower scores on the competencies underlying Working on the Business

	Accountability	Motivation	Strategy	Innovation
Sceptical		✓		✓
Cautious	✓			
Reserved	✓	✓		
Bold		✓		

Implications

Previous research has demonstrated that first-time leaders often have to deal with a number of challenges and transitions when moving into their first leadership role (e.g. Benjamin & O'Reilly, 2011; Plankhotnik, Rocco & Roberts, 2011). This period for first-time leaders can be quite taxing and it was proposed that this may place them at an increased risk of engaging in 'dark side tendencies' which may have an impact on their reputation. As a leader's reputation has been found to have an impact on various aspects of performance and success (e.g. Hall et al., 2004; Wade et al., 2006, Zinko et al., 2012), the impact of engaging in 'dark side tendencies' could be quite pervasive for not only first-time leaders but also for their teams and their organisations.

The current research suggests that certain 'dark side tendencies' are likely to have an impact on first-time leaders' reputations as measured by multi-rater feedback. Specifically, the following HDS scales appeared to have an impact on various aspects of the reputation of first-time leaders:

- Excitable: temperamental, easily disappointed and inclined to overreact to difficult situations
- Sceptical: cynical, defensive, sensitive to criticism and inclined to hold grudges
- Cautious: risk-averse, unassertive, self-doubting and concerned about being criticised
- Reserved: withdrawn, aloof, uncommunicative and indifferent to others' feelings
- Bold: overly self-confident, entitled, self-promoting, demanding and overbearing
- Mischievous: impulsive, risk-taking, limit-testing and manipulative

Not all 'dark side tendencies' appear to be equal in their impact on the reputation of first-time leaders, with the tendencies associated with being Sceptical and Reserved appearing to be particularly pervasive in their impact on the reputation of first-time leaders. On the other hand, the tendencies associated with being Cautious appeared to be more limited in their impact on the reputation of first-time leaders. Specifically, being at a higher risk of displaying the tendencies associated with being Cautious appeared to only impact on their reputation in relation to Accountability (i.e. managing performance by providing consistent and constructive feedback). Additionally, being at a high risk of displaying the following 'dark side tendencies' did not appear to have a detrimental impact on the reputation of first-time leaders as measured by multi-rater feedback:

- Leisurely: stubborn, uncooperative, agenda-driven and privately resentful
- Colourful: attention seeking, self-absorbed, distractible and easily bored
- Imaginative: eccentric, unpredictable, impractical and unfocused
- Diligent: perfectionistic, demanding, inflexible and micromanaging
- Dutiful: overly compliant, indecisive, reluctant to act independently and ingratiating

It is interesting to note that the majority of 'dark side tendencies' reflect those typical of technical specialists who tend to 'move away' from others under pressure. This is not surprising given the majority of first time leaders are moving from an individual contributor role to a leadership role.

Providing first-time leaders with a greater understanding of their likelihood to engage in certain 'dark side tendencies' and how to mitigate the risks associated with these tendencies may help enhance their leadership success. **Table 5** provides some development recommendations for first-time leaders at risk of displaying the tendencies associated with being Excitable, Sceptical, Cautious, Reserved, Bold and Mischievous.

Implications cont.

Table 5. Development Recommendations for First-Time Leaders

HDS Scale	Development Recommendations
Excitable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify situations that may trigger undesirable emotions (e.g. frustration, disappointment) and develop strategies to deal effectively with those situations. Create a plan to manage and reduce stress and increase resilience. This may include engaging in activities such as exercise, hobbies, journaling, or meditation. Explore how emotional displays may erode credibility and effectiveness to engage and lead others.
Sceptical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify times when it may be important to suspend judgment and explore others' ideas and viewpoints in an open-minded manner. Consider how to take a more balanced approach when reviewing ideas or providing feedback (i.e. don't focus just on the issues or shortcomings). Explore times where it may be beneficial to adopt a different communication approach so that it is not perceived as being defensive, argumentative or fault-finding.
Cautious	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify opportunities to more effectively manage performance by providing consistent and constructive feedback. Explore strategies to help avoid delays in making decisions and taking action including in relation to providing timely feedback and managing others' performance. Consider ways of communicating more confidently and assertively. This may include participating in formal assertiveness training.
Reserved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify opportunities to more readily connect and communicate with your team. Consider strategies for effectively engaging others during these interactions. When providing feedback and addressing performance issues, consider whether it may be necessary to soften the message so it is not seen as interpersonally insensitive. Explore strategies for motivating and engaging others such as providing positive feedback and acknowledging others' contributions and achievements.
Bold	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider times when it would be beneficial to seek others' input and invite others to contribute to help engage others. Identify opportunities to acknowledge others' contributions, share credit and celebrate joint success within one's team. Explore strategies for helping others to feel more motivated, engaged and respected. This may include obtaining feedback from one's team on how to improve these areas.
Mischievous	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider when it may be important to slow down decision making to ensure that potential alternatives, consequences and risks are adequately explored. Explore strategies for more effectively following-through on commitments and when necessary renegotiate commitments rather than just disregarding them. Identify times when it may be important to be more consistent in applying particular rules or processes to ensure people are treated fairly and equally.

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