

# The biggest mistake busy leaders make

## *SPEAKERS*

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Hi there. Today I wanted to share with you what the biggest mistake is that traditional leaders make and what you could do instead. And it's pretty counterintuitive, but once you master this habit, you'll have more impact, more energy and a better work life balance. And it's a habit that many great leaders like Bill Gates master. Before we start this episode, I wanted to share something cool. I've helped many organizations and leaders transform in the last years and adapt themselves to these fast-changing digital times. And I've identified specific traits that characterize each of them. And so, we have developed a leadership quiz to help you identify your leadership type. You don't have to be a leader of a team to do this quiz because you are a leader of your life. It's just a two-minute quiz that you will find on [www.rebelleaderwithaheart.com/quiz](http://www.rebelleaderwithaheart.com/quiz) or in the show notes of this episodes. So just take the quiz, you will get your leadership type, seven personalized lessons and a roadmap to transform yourself, your team or your organization. And don't hesitate to share it with friends and colleagues if you think it could help them as well. Now let's dive into today's episodes. There is one mistake that many busy leaders make or many traditional leaders make and that mistake makes them go from one meeting to the next one, to be in firefighting mode, to go from one task to the next one, one problem to the next one, constantly running and running and running and exhausting themselves. Do you maybe recognize this? Or do you know people like that? And I hate to admit this, but I used to be like that. I used to be in constant firefighting mode, trying to seize every opportunity, to fix every threat, constantly running, going from one thing to the next one, but that wasn't enough to have the impact that I wanted to have. So, I doubled down and started working really harder until I had this crisis of meaning and I was wondering for the sake of what am I running all the time? Or am I busy all the time. That's when it hit me that I didn't want this life anymore. And maybe you recognize this and maybe you fell into the trap that so many busy leaders fall into. And that trap is that they are so busy solving today's problems, that they have no time to transform, to transform themselves, to transform their team or their organization. So, let me repeat this there are





so many people that are so busy trying to solve today's problems that they have no time to transform. And that's when you get in this firefighting mode instead of a more strategic one and peaceful one. It's like being on a sinking ship with a hole at the bottom of the boat but instead of fixing that hole, you try to get the water out of the boat. And of course, you work really hard and it works a little bit. But at the end, you still sink while being exhausted. And I truly believe that's also this that made the difference between the success of Apple and the failure of Nokia. Because I don't believe that people at Apple were working harder than the people at Nokia. And what I want to say by this is that, in today's disruptive times, or in today's fast changing digital times, working hard doesn't work anymore. In the past, you could always compensate by working hard. Today, it's not possible anymore. You really have to do something else. So, is that something you do? Is that something your organization does? Okay, so what should you do instead then? It something that sets successful leaders apart from average ones, and it's something that Warren Buffett, Bill Gates, and so many leaders have adopted, a habit that they have adopted. And that makes all the difference. So, in fast changing digital times, you don't have to go faster or to work harder. But on the contrary, to be successful, you have to learn to slow down and to pause. Yep, I know it's pretty counter intuitive, and very ironic. But if you want to go faster, you have to slow down and pause. And why should you pause? Well, first, you should pause to analyze the root causes of problems. Because what happens is, we all hate problems, we don't like how they make us feel. We don't like the sensations in our body. And because we don't like these sensations, we want to get rid of it as soon as possible. And that's why we solve the issue as soon as possible without analyzing the root cause. And that's when you end up solving symptoms, instead of solving root causes. And when you only solve symptoms, you end up in this vicious circle where you get another problem and another problem and another problem that keeps needed to be solved instead of fixing the root cause. So that's why you have to really stop, analyze things and transform instead of firefight. But why also do you have to pause? You have to pause because you have to think about what you want to achieve. A lot of leaders don't know what they want to achieve. They don't know what they want to achieve, from their life, from their career. But even from the meeting, they're about to enter, the conversation they're having, or the task they're working on. And when you don't know what you want to achieve, you don't know what to say yes to, and what to say no to. And that's when you say yes to everything and get into overwhelm mode. So, you really have to pause and think about what you want to achieve. Then you also have to pause to let your creative brain work, because your creative brain will start working, when your rational brain stops working. And that's what research has shown. And that's also why, for instance, I have my best ideas when I'm in the shower, when I'm walking in the forest, when I'm having a chat with my friends or when I'm waking up in the morning. I don't even think about my work and poof, I have this idea that's there and that's because your creative





brain works when you are not working. And so, if you never stop working, you never give that creative brain a chance of working. And I can assure you that in these disruptive times where we all have so many things to do, you better be creative. Then also, you have to pause, because you need to increase your energy level. Because if you have low energy and high stress, that's when you get into resistance, that's when you will resist the change. That's when you will stay in your comfort zone. And you have to get out of your comfort zone and try new things if you want to adapt to the change because adapting means learning new things. And so, for that you have to go out of your comfort zone. But if you have low energy, you will stay in that comfort zone and resist the change. So, you really have to pause to increase your energy. And then also you have to pause, of course, to change your habits and to change the habits of the people around you. Because it's only with new habits, that you will be able to be successful and happy in these times that you will be able to change the culture, to adopt the new business techniques. That's all what we talk about in episode number two. So, there are a million reasons why you should learn to pause. But I have to warn you, it's not going to be easy. It's easier for you to just continue working than to pause. And why is that? It's because since your childhood, you have been taught to work hard and to only pause when things are finished. This is something that is deeply ingrained in you. This is something deeply ingrained in me. You only stop when work is finished. But the problem, in these fast-changing digital times, is that work is never finished. First of all, you get requests from everywhere. You'll get requests from your meetings, from email, SMS, WhatsApp, LinkedIn, Messenger, from your colleagues, your family, your friends, and even from strangers. So, you get these requests from everywhere and constantly, 24/7 because we are connected 24/7. And then secondly, the tasks we have to do today are often less limited than before. For instance, if I write a book, there is a beginning and an end. If instead of writing a book, I decide to make a blog with the same content. It will never be finished. I can always improve things, I can always do more research, I can always align more with my colleagues. So, the tasks that you have today are less limited and you have more requests. And these requests are less limited than before. So, you could work 24/7, and your to do list will never get finished or get to zero. So, in fast changing digital times, your work will never be finished. So, it's impossible to pause when the work is finished. And that's why it will be so difficult for you to pause. And you have to see this as a machine because another reason why it's so difficult to pause is because like I said, it's deeply ingrained in you. And so, when you stop when you slow down and you stop, that's also when you start feeling things. That's when you start feeling things that might not be very nice to feel. You might feel guilty because you have these requests, you might feel uncomfortable. And so, it's easier to just not stop and continue working hard than to stop and accept what you feel. And so, I'm going to give you some things that might help you to slow down and pause. So, first of all, I want you to remember why you pause, you pause because you want more energy and





not resist the change, you pause because you want to think about what you want to achieve. You pause because you need to analyze things, or you pause to do nothing and let your creative brain work. So really remember why you pause. You pause because you want to have more impact, not less impact. That's why you pause. Secondly, learn to accept the sensations. So, you will pause, and you will have these emotions, the guilt, the restlessness, the uncomfortable sensations in your body that you will want to escape. And so, what I want you to do when that is happening is just learn to notice the sensations and to simply accept them. And accepting doesn't mean agreeing, accepting is just learning to just notice they are there. Just accept that these sensations are there, and they won't kill you. You will survive an hour or two hours with these sensations. And what happens often is if you don't judge yourself. If you simply accept that you feel guilty, that you feel whatever you feel, that's often when it goes away also. So, learn to accept the sensations without judging yourself, because often the hardest person on yourself is yourself. So, accept the sensations instead of trying to escape them by working harder, because that doesn't work anymore. Then thirdly, give yourself permission to stop. Remember, you have always been educated to continue to work hard and not stop until you deliver everything. So, you have to be the first person to give yourself permission to stop. Just give yourself that permission. Then, the fourth thing you can do is to plan your pauses, plan them in your calendar and see them as very important meetings that you cannot cancel. So, you can postpone it if it's necessary, but if you keep postponing it won't help you. But what I notice is that the more pauses you plan, the less unplanned pauses you will need. And the more often you pause for a little while, the less big pauses you will need like a holiday or, or when you burn out. When you burn out. It's your body telling you have crossed every warning sign and you have to stop, and it will make you stop for a couple of months. So, the more pauses and even small pauses you will plan the less unplanned, big pauses you will need. Then also try to make a habit of pausing. Remember that it's your habits that will make all the difference. So probably your current habit is to work hard, and that habit is a connection in your brain. It's a physical, nervous connection in your brain. That is a big connection and if you want a new habit you have to make new connection in your brain. So, practice pausing a lot, you need approximately 66 days to build a new habit research has shown. So, take this habit of pausing. If there is one thing, I want you to remember or one thing I want you to do from this whole podcast Rebel Leader with a Heart is to take the habit of pausing. And then the last thing I want you to do is to pause collectively, it's always easier to build new habits together than if you have to do it by yourself. So, if you are in a team, if you are in an organization, try to build this culture of pausing in your team in your organization. It will help everyone to learn that habit and you won't feel guilty if you pause while all the rest is still working really hard. That's for instance also why I decided to Implement massages at work, because pausing and taking care of yourself was something that I realized was crucial if we wanted to be successful. And





I gave the example, I even told my shareholders once that I couldn't go to a meeting because I had a massage planned. Of course, I postponed the massage, but it was just to give a sign that massages are important. And so, I see a lot of organizations, they put things in place for the people. And then the leaders don't take advantage of these things like the massages or like coffee breaks or whatever or not working late. And they don't give an example. I always also went home very early. So often when I went home around five o'clock or sometimes earlier, I would go to most of the offices to say goodbye to everyone to just show as an example, I'm leaving home early. Because if you say things to people and you do something else, it doesn't work, of course. So, in summary, the biggest mistake traditional and busy leaders make is that there are so busy solving today's problems that they have no time to transform themselves, to transform their team or their organization. And so, the first habits that you should adopt is to pause. Pause to let your creative brain work, to analyze things, to think about what you want to achieve, to increase your energy and to change your habits. And then, of course, it will be uncomfortable. And so, remember why you pause, accept the sensations, give yourself permission to pause, plan some pauses in your calendar, just right after this podcast, I want you to immediately go to your agenda and to plan pauses. Make a habit of pausing and try to learn this collectively. Once you understand how to manage this, once you adopt this habit of pausing, that's when you will start working less while having more impact, really. And it's because they didn't learn to manage this that a lot of companies didn't manage to reinvent their organizations. They were working, working, working, working really hard until their ship sank. But there is even a bigger reason why I want you to pause and that will be the topic of my next podcast or my next episode. And once you understand how to manage this, you will really start seeing your world differently and you will really transform, increase your impact, have better relations with the people around you. And this is something that you need to manage before your actions. And I believe it's because Apple managed this very well that they became really successful. And it's because the players of the music industry didn't manage this. That's they almost disappeared or went from the big seven, I think to the big four or a lot of them disappeared and lost a lot of revenues. So, right after this podcast, go to your calendar and plan some pauses. And I'll see you in the next episode about what you have to manage before your actions and before your time. Bye.

