



THE 10 CAREER MISTAKES HOSPITALITY LEADERS MAKE WITHOUT REALIZING IT

Navigating leadership transitions can often feel like a maze full of uncertainty. Many hospitality leaders find themselves overwhelmed when facing complex leadership changes, such as executive exits or critical role fills. This complexity can cause significant disruptions and lead to missed opportunities for growth and clarity.

We understand how daunting leadership transitions can be, and after 30+ years in hospitality and 23 years in career services, we've seen firsthand how crucial support during these transitions is. Our mission is to help leaders like you thrive amidst turmoil, not just manage through it. With numerous certifications and a stellar reputation backed by 150+ five-star reviews, we have the expertise required to guide you through even the toughest leadership changes.

Leadership transitions are often chaotic, filled with emotional turmoil as leaders feel confused and anxious about the uncertainty ahead. You might feel the pressure of aligning the team, ensuring seamless communication, and maintaining the organization's reputation, all while managing your own anxiety. This chaos can lead to reckless decision-making, prolonged uncertainty, and ultimately, failure in achieving the organizational outcomes you strive for.

Hospitality produces some of the most capable leaders in business.

You manage people, pressure, customers, cost, and chaos, simultaneously, every single day. You learn accountability fast. You learn empathy the hard way. You learn that results matter, but how you get them matters more.

And yet, too many exceptional hospitality leaders stall, plateau, or get sidelined, not because they lack talent, but because they unknowingly step into career traps that aren't obvious from the floor.

This guide exists to surface those blind spots.

Not to criticize.

Not to lecture.

But to give you clarity before your career makes decisions for you.



MISTAKE #1: BELIEVING HARD WORK SPEAKS FOR ITSELF

Hospitality rewards hustle.
Business rewards visibility.

Many leaders assume that long hours, loyalty, and results will naturally translate into advancement. Sometimes they do. Often, they don't.

Decision-makers don't see your 70-hour weeks.
They see outcomes, narrative, and leadership presence.

Reality:

Hard work is expected. Clarity and influence are what separate leaders.

Reframe:

If someone outside your organization asked, "What kind of leader are you?", would the answer be clear?

MISTAKE #2: STAYING TOO LONG IN A ROLE THAT STOPPED GROWING YOU

Hospitality values loyalty.
But loyalty without progression quietly erodes leverage.

Many leaders remain in roles long after the learning curve flattens, waiting for recognition, a title change, or "the right time."

Meanwhile, their market value stalls.

Reality:

Time served $\neq$ career growth.

Reframe:

Ask yourself annually:
What am I learning here that I couldn't learn anywhere else?
If the answer is unclear, so is your trajectory.



MISTAKE #3: LETTING YOUR TITLE DEFINE YOUR VALUE

Hospitality titles are notoriously inconsistent.

A "Director" in one company runs a region.
In another, they run a shift.

Too many leaders anchor their identity to a title rather than scope, impact, and leadership complexity.

Reality:

Senior leaders hire for capability, not labels.

Reframe:

Your value lives in:

- Scale of responsibility
- Decisions owned
- People developed
- Outcomes delivered

Not what's printed on your business card.

MISTAKE #4: UNDERESTIMATING HOW YOU'RE PERCEIVED

You may see yourself as direct.
Others may experience you as rigid.

You may see yourself as calm under pressure.
Others may see disengagement.

Perception, not intention, shapes opportunity.

Reality: Careers are influenced by how leadership feels to others.

Reframe: Strong leaders seek feedback before it becomes performance commentary.

Ask: What's it like to work for me when things go wrong?



MISTAKE #5: CONFUSING OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE WITH EXECUTIVE READINESS

Operational mastery gets you promoted early.
Executive readiness gets you promoted later.

At senior levels, leaders are evaluated on:

- Judgment
- Strategic thinking
- Talent development
- Decision quality under ambiguity

Not just execution.

Reality:

Great operators don't automatically become great executives.

Reframe:

Shift from doing to designing, systems, leaders, and outcomes.

MISTAKE #6: WAITING UNTIL A CRISIS TO THINK ABOUT YOUR CAREER

Most leaders only reassess their careers after:

- A restructuring
- A leadership change
- Burnout
- An unexpected exit

By then, choices narrow.

Reality:

Career strategy works best before urgency.

Reframe:

The best time to prepare for change is when you don't need it yet.



MISTAKE #7: ASSUMING HOSPITALITY EXPERIENCE WON'T TRANSLATE

Some leaders internalize outdated narratives:

"I'm too hospitality-specific."

"Other industries won't get my background."

That belief becomes self-limiting.

Reality:

Hospitality is one of the most demanding leadership environments in business.

Reframe:

The issue isn't your experience, it's how it's positioned and translated.

MISTAKE #8: NEGLECTING YOUR LEADERSHIP STORY

Most leaders can explain what they've done.

Few can articulate why it matters.

Without a clear narrative, others fill in the gaps.

Reality:

Careers are shaped by stories, not timelines.

Reframe:

Your story should explain:

- What you stand for
- How you lead
- What problems you're trusted to solve



MISTAKE #9: TREATING YOUR CAREER LIKE AN HR PROCESS

Applications. Keywords. Waiting.
Senior roles are rarely filled this way.

Reality:

Executive opportunities are relationship-driven and trust-based.

Reframe:

Your career is a leadership asset, not a transaction.

MISTAKE #10: DOING IT ALONE

Hospitality leaders are used to carrying weight quietly.
But isolation limits perspective.

Reality:

The strongest leaders use support, strategic, confidential, human.

Reframe:

Asking for guidance isn't weakness.
It's leadership maturity.

CLOSING: A PEOPLE-FIRST PERSPECTIVE

Hospitality doesn't just teach service.
It teaches responsibility for people, outcomes, and experience.

At 86 Service, we believe careers deserve the same care we give teams and guests,
thoughtful, intentional, and human.

If any of these mistakes felt familiar, you're not behind.

You're aware.

And awareness is where better decisions begin.



Let's talk confidentially.

Whether you're:

- Preparing for your next chapter
- Navigating uncertainty
- Repositioning your leadership experience
- Supporting leaders through transition

86 Service exists to help leaders move forward with clarity, dignity, and strategy.

People First. Always.

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