5 Common Mistakes Entrepreneurs Make When Networking and Building Connections

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Key Takeaways

- Effective networking can significantly boost your reputation and lead to valuable connections and business success — but there are five common mistakes that can undermine these benefits.
- These mistakes include being inauthentic, coming across as self-obsessed, being unprepared, not asking questions and forgetting to follow up.

I am a firm believer that building connections is of the utmost importance to a happy and successful life, and I am particularly interested in meeting people who come from vastly different backgrounds than mine.

Connections are even more important when you are a dynamic entrepreneur who is eager to put themselves out there for the world to see. A businessperson who networks is also keen to learn as much as they can about the industry they operate within, as well as from various business communities through the cordial relationships they foster through events, such as trade fairs and conferences.

This is a highly beneficial exercise because by making the

right connections, one can increase their reputation, develop important business collaborations, as well as secure the resources needed to boost a company. In some cases, research has shown that successful networking leads to eventual startup success.

However, there is a caveat. Bad networking habits do develop among some entrepreneurs. There are various faux pas that entrepreneurs often commit during these relationship-building events, whether they do it knowingly or unknowingly, which can have a negative impact on their business. Here, I have identified five common erroneous habits that could ruin your networking efforts.

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1. Being inauthentic

Honesty is indeed the best policy when you are introducing yourself and your business to a networking peer. However, many entrepreneurs begin their networking event by putting on a front about who they really are. While entrepreneurs are not required to reveal absolutely everything about themselves, it is important to approach a new acquaintance with honesty, politeness and a cordial attitude that doesn’t feel out of place with your actual personality.

Forced efforts to connect are painfully obvious at these events, so it is very important that entrepreneurs don’t accidentally project such an image when introducing themselves. Besides, you never know who you might end up meeting, whether that be a future investor or a prospective client.

2. Seeming self-obsessed

Self-obsessive behaviors are off-putting, especially when networking events are specifically organized to foster a give-and-take interaction. You are ideally playing a zero-sum game, which means that you have to listen to others and meaningfully respond to their opinions instead of simply talking about yourself without giving any attention back to the listener.

One might think that success stems from putting oneself first, even in conversations with others, but I beg to differ, being the figurehead of a service-oriented company with a rich history that goes back more than a hundred years. Your passion for your business and your industry should be conveyed in a down-to-earth manner, which opens up room for further discussions with others and possible knowledge sharing, instead of seeming completely consumed by your own pursuits and making everything about yourself.

Related: 5 Rookie Networking Fails and How to Avoid Them

3. Being unprepared

Although preparedness seems like an obvious character trait of an entrepreneur, many actually take this for granted when it comes to networking. When you meet a prospective client or simply a fellow entrepreneur with whom you could potentially collaborate in the future, not pitching your business as succinctly as possible could prove to be a grave error.

What’s more important for an entrepreneur is to convey their personal values and explain how these are represented by their company for interested parties. Before you enter that trade conference, make sure you are prepared to pitch what you do to people you meet. Keep that business card in hand. In addition, you can also do your research on who might attend the event in question, so that you will know whom you can prioritize in a

room full of people.

4. Not asking questions

Listening to someone talk is one thing, but asking further questions is what truly shows your openness, engagement and curiosity about the topic at hand. A common mistake people make when meeting others is not driving the conversation with questions about a particular subject or about the individual, or questions that are more open-ended in nature, which could encourage participation from others.

A simple, “What inspired you to start your business?” could go a long way, as this sort of query openly encourages people to talk about their background and interests. This applies to online networking platforms, too, such as social media and virtual conferences, where sometimes a well-timed question can bring unexpected connections into your business life.

Related: 4 Little-Known Secrets to Better Networking

5. Forgetting to follow up

This is a very common but very serious problem many entrepreneurs face: what happens after a networking event. It is simple courtesy to follow up on the most interesting connections you have made, either on the very next day or at the very least, within the same working week. I would say that the sooner you send that email, the better.

Sometimes, you might have your connection’s business card and details, and you may simply forget where you placed it after the event. At times, a prospective client you met somewhere could be sitting in your phone’s contacts list, and you may forget they are even there. This is why you should be very organized and methodical about your networking. Take notes, create reminders to ensure that you execute every follow-up to

the highest standards and that you don’t leave any valuable relationship hanging.

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How This Women-Led Company Is Shaking Up the Cocktail Industry

CYN'S MIX, a health-conscious, dry ingredient cocktail mix brand, started literally shaking up the way people make mixed drinks when it launched in 2023. Here, co-founder and CEO Bettina Paus shares how she and Cynthia Snell, co-founder and CCO, brought their product to life.

Please give the elevator pitch of your business.
CYN'S MIX is redefining cocktail mixers—premium, authentic, and crafted for modern, health-minded entertaining. Upscale yet effortless, it's quickly becoming the go-to favorite for cocktail enthusiasts everywhere. Born in New York, made for the world.

What inspired you to create it?
The spark happened years ago at a Midtown restaurant, when I watched my future business partner carve a watermelon behind the bar and instantly transform it into a martini. It was fresh, surprising, and unforgettable. That moment planted the idea: what if cocktails this good could be enjoyed anywhere—without needing a bartender, fancy tools, or hard-to-find ingredients?

That vision grew into CYN'S MIX—a women-led brand reimagining

cocktail culture with all-natural, wellness-minded dry mixers. Free from artificial flavors, colors, and preservatives, our blends deliver convenience without compromise. The best part? Watching people take a sip and say, *"Wait—this came from a dry mixer?"* That reaction never gets old.

Related: 'We've Served Over 2 Million': Their Milkshake Went Viral and Helped This Local Burger Joint Grow Into a Global Brand

Please tell us one "holy @#$!" moment — something amazing or terrifying that you didn't see coming.
One of our biggest "holy @#$!" moments came this summer, when CYN'S MIX partnered with CeraVe/L'Oréal to craft the beauty brand's 20th Anniversary signature cocktail—the *Laguna Margarita*. That collaboration earned more than 2.2 billion global media impressions and put our mixers in the spotlight with influencers, press, and industry leaders.

We had so much fun creating this striking blue cocktail—playfully noting that even its ingredients had elements to keep your skin glowing. Refreshing, vibrant, and unlike anything else, it became a true showstopper.

When a brand as reputable as L'Oréal embraced our product with such enthusiasm, we were blown away. It proved that CYN'S MIX isn't just a retail item—it's a premium, shake-and-serve solution with the creativity, consistency, and quality to elevate everything from home entertaining and everyday gatherings to private jets, luxury events, and high-end concerts.

What advice would you give entrepreneurs looking for funding?
Aim to raise only the capital you truly need, and be sure to negotiate terms that don't give away too much equity in exchange for too little funding.

Related: "I Never Managed a Bar, Let Alone Opened a Place': How This Musician Created His Dream Venue and Built a Thriving

Nightlife Business

What are some recent wins?
We are proud of our exponential growth this year. CYN'S MIX is now featured in some of New York City's most reputable gourmet stores, and we have also partnered with several gift basket companies and financial firms for corporate gifting. On top of that, we have exciting catering events on the horizon—further proof that our mixers are resonating across retail, corporate, and event channels.

What does the word "entrepreneur" mean to you?
To me, being an entrepreneur means having an unending drive to create, innovate, and improve. It's the gift of developing unexpected solutions that can make a meaningful, positive impact on the lives of many.

What is something many aspiring business owners think they need that they really don't?
Many aspiring business owners think they need everything to be perfect—massive funding, the perfect team, or flawless timing—before they can start. The truth is, if you wait for perfection, you may never take the leap. Momentum comes from action, not waiting, and it's that first step that sparks everything else.

Is there a particular quote or saying that you use as personal motivation?
Yes—my guiding quote is, "Look for miracles, not obstacles." It pushes me to focus on possibilities, embrace challenges, and keep striving beyond the status quo—fueling creativity and innovation every day with CYN'S MIX.

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The Biggest Consumer Goods Giant in the World Is Laying Off Thousands of Workers: ‘The World Is Changing’

Key Takeaways

- Nestlé is the largest consumer goods company in the world and owns more than 2,000 brands, including Gerber baby food and Purina pet food.
- On Thursday, the company announced that it would reduce its workforce by 16,000 globally over the next two years.
- Nestlé employs 227,000 workers worldwide, with 36,000 employees based in the U.S.

Nestlé, the biggest consumer goods company in the world with a market capitalization of $265 billion, is preparing to cut 16,000 jobs globally over the next two years.

Nestlé, which oversees more than 2,000 brands, including Nespresso, Gerber baby food, Purina pet food and KitKat candy bars, announced on Thursday that the layoffs would target approximately 12,000 white-collar jobs, resulting in a cost savings of $1.25 billion. The remaining 4,000 jobs will affect those in manufacturing and the supply chain positions. The job cuts will reduce Nestlé's global workforce by 6% overall.

"The world is changing, and Nestlé needs to change faster," said Philipp Navratil, Nestlé CEO, in a press release on Thursday. "This will include making hard but necessary decisions to reduce headcount over the next two years. We will do this with respect and transparency."

Related: Microsoft's CEO Says the Company's Mass Layoffs, Despite Financial Success, Are 'Weighing Heavily on Me' in an Internal Memo

Nestlé's U.S. division has about 36,000 employees, according to Forbes. The company employs about 277,000 workers globally.

The layoffs are part of Nestlé's wider effort to reduce spending by $3.75 billion by 2027, up from its previous target of $3.14 billion. The company said in the press release that

it would increase automation and sharing services among divisions to fill in the gaps left by laid-off employees.

It’s unclear how Nestlé plans to bring more automation to its corporate offices. A recent report published earlier this month from Challenger, Gray and Christmas shows that more than 17,000 jobs have been lost this year so far due to AI.

Navratil stepped into the CEO role last month after former CEO Laurent Freixe was fired for failing to disclose a relationship with a subordinate, which was a breach of Nestlé’s code of conduct. Navratil is a longtime Nestlé employee who first joined the company as an internal auditor in 2001. He rose through the ranks and was previously chief executive of Nestlé Nespresso, according to his LinkedIn.

Other consumer goods companies have recently announced plans to cut jobs. Procter & Gamble indicated in June that it would reduce its workforce by 15%, or 7,000 jobs, as part of a two-year restructuring program. Meanwhile, Estée Lauder approved layoffs affecting 3,200 employees out of a 57,000-person global workforce in August.

Related: Meta Informs Staff that Layoffs Will Begin in a Now-Leaked Internal Memo

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PR Isn't Dead. It Just Needs to Speak AI.

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When I landed a *Forbes* feature in 2015 about "How to Get Press," it felt like a defining milestone. I was energized by

the “magic moment.” The coverage drove a surge of attention to SMACK! Media and, for a moment, validated years of work building brands from the ground up.

A week later, as the initial buzz faded, I was reminded of something important: press is not a single moment, and certainly not a finish line. Unless the piece lands in Google’s top rank, press is raw material and fuel, particularly in this new age of discovery.

In 2025, your goal should be to turn that coverage into seeds for AI to find you. When someone opens ChatGPT and types, “best nootropic protein bar,” or “best mattress for sleep,” your brand should already exist in the answer. And it can, if you intentionally engineer it.

Today, coverage is *input*. Your press and exposure become data for generative systems. Every article, link, phrase becomes a signal that AI models use to build the “map” of what your brand *is.*

Related: Your SEO Strategy Is Dying — Do This Now or Get Buried in AI Results

With a former client, IQBAR, we did not leave messaging to chance. Press coverage was guided with target phrases — brain health, adaptogens, plant-based bars — so that when people queried AI, the signals matched those intent phrases. We did the same thing with Molecule Sleep, a sleep company with products designed to promote cooler, more restorative sleep. In our communication about them, we would talk about “medically-backed sleep technology” and “recovery-focused sleep.”

One of the strongest levers is *anchor text.* A publication can write a glowing story about your product, but if the in-article link says “read more here,” you have lost an opportunity. Instead, add links using phrases you want to own, such as: *“best collagen supplement for women,” or “top clean*

high protein bars.” This anchor text is a beacon, and over time, AI agents will learn that when someone asks about “top collagen supplement,” this brand is a match.

Now, once you land the coverage, celebrate it, but don’t put it up as a trophy on a shelf. Press is no longer about attention; it’s about *integration.* Instead, treat it as the backbone of your content architecture. Every article, interview and backlink becomes a signal that helps AI and search systems understand who you are and what you’re known for, so it’s key to make every earned story live in your own domain and optimized.

Related: Your SEO Strategy Is Dying — Do This Now or Get Buried in AI Results

There are three ways to this: build a press hub on your site and socials with clean structure (title, excerpt, key quote, date and target keywords); internally link to product pages or blog posts using anchor text that mirrors your press; refresh old press with new context, launches or milestones, then link into it, and share it across LinkedIn, reels and newsletters.

By doing this, you layer a semantic ecosystem around your coverage. AI crawlers see your site, and it reinforces that language again and again.

It’s no surprise that AI agents don’t read like humans. They scan structure. This means that your press posts need to be scannable (and easily digestible): use headers, pull quotes, bold summaries and clear metadata.

Avoid burying your signal in paragraphs. Instead, extract the strongest line and make it a headline. For my own CPG company, Anything Brands, we offer all-natural body care products designed to soothe and relieve common skin irritations ranging from hemorrhoids to eczema, itches, rashes and dry skin.

Within our communication, we emphasize phrases like “all-

natural eczema relief” and “plant-based soothing balm” for Amazon and AI search engines to recognize. Incorporating customer testimonials with phrases like “natural soothing relief” into articles and blog posts reinforces those keywords organically.

If the original article is paywalled or behind an external domain, write a summarized version on your blog (with attribution) for crawlers to see it inside your own site. Pair that with short videos or reels using the same key phrase, and then those become indexable too.

Unlike in 2015, press alone will not move the needle unless it permeates your entire marketing ecosystem. Use your coverage *everywhere*. Embed pull quotes into ads, use logos in email footers (ie, “As Seen in”), podcast episodes, packaging and event materials. Ask your influencers and best customers for video content, and as a founder, film reaction reels to your own press coverage and post on TikTok, Instagram and LinkedIn.

Lisa Curtis, founder of Kuli Kuli Foods, America’s leading supplier of moringa, did just that when her organic superfood moringa powder was featured in the New York Times. She promoted this in an engaging and very personal video. These types of videos and captions to the content become new signals tied to your key phrase.

Lastly, include media quotes on signage or handouts and QR codes to your press hub pages at events or trade shows. When my team and I invite journalists to panels, we reference recent coverage to reinforce the narrative in the room.

How can you get started? Think about your brand’s key selling propositions and ask ChatGPT, “What are the top supplements for joint health?” or “What’s the cleanest energy drink?” If your brand isn’t showing up, analyze your coverage and ask yourself these 3 things:

- Did you use your target phrase in press or anchor text?

- Did you host that content on your domain, or is it hidden behind paywalls?
- Does your site echo that phrase in internal links, blog posts and metadata?

You may have authority, but if it's not visible in the AI map, it does not count and it certainly does not convert.

I still think back to that *Forbes* piece that spiked my adrenaline early on. It felt monumental, and at the time, I did what most founders could: I shared it across social channels, added it to my signature block and celebrated the milestone.

Related: Will AI Bring Mass Unemployment or a New Revolution?

But looking back, I realize there was more I could have done to keep it alive beyond that initial buzz. Even without AI in 2015, I could have repurposed that coverage in newsletters, reflected on it in future stories and woven it into new conversations.

Today, the same feature would live as a node in the web of discovery — linked, cited and repurposed across formats — continuing to drive visibility months or even years later.

That's the evolution of PR. Press isn't a one-day win; it's an asset that compounds when you treat it as part of your long-term ecosystem. Every feature, podcast or quote can keep working for you if you structure it, reshare it and teach AI — and your audience — how to find it again.

The next time you land a great press hit, don't just post it, but *plant it.* Link it in your bio, cite it in your newsletter, slice it into a reel, and use those words to train both people and platforms on who you are. Feed and water it intentionally, and it will keep working long after the headline fades.

It's not just about being seen. It's about being *discovered*

forever.

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Before You Market Externally, Win Over Your Own Team

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Key Takeaways

- Internal PR is not the same as HR: it’s inspiring your people to narrate your story instead of taking care of their personnel needs.
- Your employees are the embodiment of your brand; because of that, they’re your best and most influential brand ambassadors.
- The more invested your team is in your brand, the more ROI you’ll see from nurturing your people above all else.

I’ve spent years helping companies build bold, flashy PR campaigns that catch the media’s eye. But along the way, I’ve learned something even more valuable: You’ve got to win over your own team first, capture *their* trust, or else none of the other business outcomes really matter.

So many business leaders of client-facing companies devote almost all of their effort to external factors, like digital advertising, reputation building, press coverage and influencer partnerships. In doing so, they often neglect to pour energy into the people sitting right inside their walls. Your team members aren’t only your workforce; they’re your first audience. If they’re not excited and totally on board with what you’re building and doing, why would anyone else be?

Your employees can be your most powerful PR channel. Don’t let that power go to waste.

Why ‘internal PR’ is far more than just ‘HR’

I used to think internal relations and communications were sort of … well, fluffy. Filler. Unnecessary “feel-good” stuff that didn’t directly relate to my firm’s customer service. Sure, send out quarterly cheerleading memos to root your team

on, meet in the break room for birthday cupcakes and send a gift for a new family arrival. But that's about the extent of what I thought "internal PR" entailed.

The truth is, your people *are* your brand. And that has far-reaching consequences. They're the ones talking to clients, the ones showing up on social, going to conferences and chatting with friends about their jobs over dinner. Whether you like it or not, they're already telling your company's story. Internal PR is about not only giving them the right story to tell, but inspiring them to *want* to tell it.

A hard-earned lesson: get staff buy-in from the start

If you follow my published writings, you'll know that basically everything I've learned as an entrepreneur has been learned the hard way. Learning to appreciate my team as my most valuable PR asset is no exception.

A few years ago, we launched a big media push for a client, thinking the coverage alone would lead to tremendous success for the campaign. Instead, the campaign flopped internally with my own staff. Why? Because my employees hadn't been brought into the "why" of the campaign from the start. They were not invested. They were not excited. In turn, no one was sharing the press hits with a larger audience beyond the client, none of my people seemed proud of our efforts.

This gut punch served as a wake-up call to me. Afterward, I started situating internal PR as the very first step of any campaign. That means that now, before any campaign parameters are cemented in place and before anything at all goes public, I hold a kickoff meeting with the project team to go over the project goals, the messaging and, most importantly, their role in the bigger picture — how each person's individual contribution is vital to our shared mission.

The results have been phenomenal. No matter the nature of your enterprise, your company initiatives will become so much more effective when your team members are aligned with the intent. They'll start sharing company-related posts on LinkedIn and other platforms unprompted. You'll hear them bragging about company wins to other clients. You'll find them pitching their own creative ideas in meetings, enriching your efforts all the more.

Related: Here's How Employee Advocacy Benefits Brands

Practical steps to take to turn your team into your secret weapon

So what can you do, starting today, to tap into this incredible source of PR for your brand?

- **Engage early and share often.** Rather than informing your staff of company happenings after the fact, give them insider access to big news well before it goes public. They should feel like trusted allies in all your efforts, not just the manpower fueling your business. When they're privy to exciting developments, they're more likely to shout them from the rooftops.
- **Turn the spotlight on your staff.** Leverage your company platforms – social media, newsletters, eblasts, group gatherings – to highlight the accomplishments of your people, not just of your company. Announce team wins, promotions, behind-the-scenes teamwork, even the passion projects of your employees outside of work. Sharing personal stories makes your brand feel personal, more real, and it shows your employees that they really matter.
- **Equip your team with tools.** You can't send someone in to do a job without the toolkit to accomplish it, so prepare resources your staff can use to make your brand shine: pre-drafted social copy, branded visuals, talking

points they can refer to in client meetings or at events. The easier you can make it for them to serve as your ambassadors, the more willing they'll be to actively and confidently represent you.

- **Keep things fun.** People like games, rewards, friendly competitions. They shouldn't have to be off the clock to be smiling and laughing. One idea is to play "PR Bingo," having employees fill out a card showing when they pitch a winning story idea, share a media placement online, attend a networking event or make a new company contact. Along the way, they earn points that can win them a prize.

Related: 5 Ways to Authentically Connect Your Employees to the Brand

Ride the ripple effect

When your people are genuinely pumped about your brand, the people around them can feel it. Clients can tell when your employees are honored to work for you and feel valued by you. Investors, journalists and other stakeholders pick up on that energy and want to be a part of it.

So always remember that PR starts at home – right in your own office, right with your own staff. They're the VIP members of your audience, your biggest fans and loudest megaphones. Your success means their success and vice versa. To have their belief in you on display for all to see? That's more powerful than any press release ever could be.

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This Is the No. 1 Mistake

People Make as a Boss — But It's Easy to Fix

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Key Takeaways

- Micromanagement can erode trust, decrease morale and lead to high employee turnover.
- Understanding the underlying reasons for your micromanaging tendencies is crucial for transforming into a supportive coach and leader.
- Stopping micromanagement involves deliberate self-reflection on trust, delegation and the personal decision to focus on coaching over controlling.

Once upon a time, I worked for a bad boss, whom I nicknamed "the Chopper." As I share in my book, *The Devil Emails at Midnight: What Good Leaders Can Learn from Bad Bosses*, the Chopper genuinely seemed to enjoy micromanaging all of us — he mastered the art. Doing all of our jobs seemed to bring him so much more joy than doing his own job. He never stepped into the role he was meant to do: to coach, to train and to lead. My experience with the Chopper left me pondering this question: Why can't some bosses stop micromanaging?

Many of us have experienced micromanagement firsthand; we know it can stop us from taking initiative and start to slowly erode trust on the team. We no longer feel valued. We can become disengaged and demotivated. Ultimately, being micromanaged can affect our performance. Some of us may be labeled a "poor performer" and pushed out of the company.

So on this National Boss's Day, let's stop ourselves from falling into one of the most notorious bad boss behaviors out there: micromanaging. Ask yourself these three questions to stop micromanaging in its tracks.

Related: Your Pointless Micromanaging Is Costing Your Business Millions — Here Are 5 Ways to Fix It

How do I know if I am micromanaging?

Sometimes, your team or colleagues may directly say that you are micromanaging. This may come up in employee engagement survey results, in performance review feedback or in a live discussion. It may come up in employee exit interviews, so be sure to understand the reasons why people choose to leave.

Sometimes, they won't use the word micromanaging. Here are some of the things they might say instead:

Mita doesn't trust me to do the work I am leading and drive results.

Mita doesn't have regular check-ins with me. Instead, we meet constantly, but our time together is inefficient.

I can never actually make any decision on my own. Mita has to approve everything.

Mita redoes most of my work. I'm unclear what I did wrong.

Persistent micromanagement can start to set little fires on your team and erode inclusion and trust. In employee engagement surveys, you may see a dip in team morale. You may also see an increase in self-reported burnout, loss of trust and feeling a loss of control. Your team may be missing deadlines, may be less productive, unable to deliver high-quality work and ultimately may walk out the door.

Related: Why You Need to Stop Micromanaging Your Team and Learn to Let Go

How do I understand why I might be micromanaging?

In my time coaching leaders, very few proclaim that they are a micromanager. So let's identify the root causes of micromanaging. What causes us to hover like helicopters?

Review the following statements. Be honest with yourself about what resonates:

I feel a loss of control in my personal life, so I am finding ways to regain control at work, focusing on the details that I can directly affect and have ownership over.

I have issues trusting people. It's hard for me to believe that someone can do the job as well as I can. I don't know how to hold people accountable or what to do if they make mistakes.

I have trouble unplugging and enjoying my time off from work. I can't remember the last time I took a vacation and wasn't checking and responding to email or Slack. I get anxious when things are quiet and I don't know what's happening.

I have too many things to do at work and at home. If I do it myself instead of delegating, it will be faster. It will take me too long to explain what needs to be done.

I actually really enjoy being in the details and doing the actual work. I don't enjoy coaching and directing people to do the work.

Once you understand why you are micromanaging, you can then focus on how to stop this behavior.

Related: How to Strike a Balance Between Micromanaging and

Under-Managing

How do I stop micromanaging?

As leaders, we must understand the difference between micromanaging and coaching. When we micromanage, we tell our teams exactly how to do their work, monitor how the work is being done and we may end up doing the work for them. When we coach, we spend time explaining our expectations for inputs and outputs, teach them the skills they need to complete the task at hand, coach them through mistakes, empower them to make an impact and reach their potential at work.

Refer to these questions to monitor your micromanaging tendencies:

Why do I want to redo the work my team submitted? Is it factually inaccurate? Is it not presented in a clear and concise manner?

Why do I need to make this decision? What happens if someone else on this team makes the decision?

What details matter and what details don't matter? Have I communicated this to my team?

What work can I delegate? What work am I holding onto and need to let go of?

Do I consistently ask for feedback from my team on what I can do differently? To make sure I am not hovering, and I am in coach mode?

Finally, am I excited to manage and coach people, or have I been pressured into leading teams? Would I be happier building my expertise as an individual contributor?

Micromanaging over time can destroy our cultures. It's the small ways in which we hover over teams, do their work for

them and our inability to coach and teach that can set little fires in the organization. Teams become demotivated and stop contributing ideas. They can't make decisions on their own or do meaningful work because they have been trained that their boss will tell them exactly what to do.

So don't become that bad boss who hovers like a helicopter. Don't spend the time you have available squeezing the joy out of work and breaking trust and inclusion on your teams. Spend that time you have available to help your teams do their very best work.

Key Takeaways

- Micromanagement can erode trust, decrease morale and lead to high employee turnover.
- Understanding the underlying reasons for your micromanaging tendencies is crucial for transforming into a supportive coach and leader.
- Stopping micromanagement involves deliberate self-reflection on trust, delegation and the personal decision to focus on coaching over controlling.

Once upon a time, I worked for a bad boss, whom I nicknamed "the Chopper." As I share in my book, *The Devil Emails at Midnight: What Good Leaders Can Learn from Bad Bosses*, the Chopper genuinely seemed to enjoy micromanaging all of us – he mastered the art. Doing all of our jobs seemed to bring him so much more joy than doing his own job. He never stepped into the role he was meant to do: to coach, to train and to lead. My experience with the Chopper left me pondering this question: Why can't some bosses stop micromanaging?

Many of us have experienced micromanagement firsthand; we know it can stop us from taking initiative and start to slowly erode trust on the team. We no longer feel valued. We can become disengaged and demotivated. Ultimately, being

micromanaged can affect our performance. Some of us may be labeled a “poor performer” and pushed out of the company.

So on this National Boss’s Day, let’s stop ourselves from falling into one of the most notorious bad boss behaviors out there: micromanaging. Ask yourself these three questions to stop micromanaging in its tracks.

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Get Microsoft Office Pro 2021 and Windows 11 Pro for Just $45

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Small-business owners spend an average of $1,000 annually on software subscriptions alone, according to data from Statista. If you’re managing spreadsheets, handling client communications, creating presentations, or running your business from multiple devices, you’re probably juggling various subscriptions that can add up quickly. The good news

is that until October 19, you can get both Microsoft Office Professional 2021 and Windows 11 Pro with lifetime licenses for only $44.97, eliminating your company's recurring software costs.

MS Office Pro 2021 gives you lifetime access to Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Outlook, Teams, Publisher, Access, and OneNote. That's everything you need for handling data, creating presentations, managing email, and collaborating with your team. Whether you're processing invoices, analyzing sales figures, or presenting to clients, these tools will handle it all without forcing you into making monthly subscription payments.

Windows 11 Pro makes this bundle even more outstanding for business owners. It's designed specifically for professionals who need security, performance, and features that go beyond the standard version. Advanced security features like biometric login, TPM 2.0, and Windows Sandbox help keep your business data protected from threats. BitLocker device encryption means your sensitive files remain secure even if your laptop is stolen.

Best of all, Windows 11 Pro can even significantly increase your productivity. Snap layouts let you organize multiple windows efficiently, and you can seamlessly work across virtual desktops. You can finally dictate documents accurately with the improved voice typing feature, which can save a significant amount of time. Plus, when you're juggling multiple projects (when aren't you?) you'll find all the files and information you need a lot faster with the enhanced search experience.

What will really turbocharge your workflow, though, is Copilot, Windows 11's AI-powered assistant that is built right into the operating system. Copilot can summarize web pages, generate code, kickstart your writing, and more. But, unlike other AI programs, Copilot can change settings and perform

other tasks specific to your operating system. If you're an entrepreneur wearing multiple hats, this kind of AI assistance can genuinely save you hours every week.

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Stop Falling For the ‘Recyclable’ Label — Here’s How to Make Sure Your Packaging Is Actually Sustainable

Opinions expressed by Entrepreneur contributors are their own.

Key Takeaways

- The global plastic recycling rate is alarmingly low at less than 10%, with consumers increasingly willing to pay for sustainable options.
- Businesses can drive growth and build loyalty by investing in circular solutions like aluminum packaging, clear labeling and supportive recycling policies.
- Entrepreneurs who prioritize sustainability and transparency in packaging can gain a competitive edge.

Despite the familiar “chasing arrows” symbol stamped on labels

and packaging, the reality is stark: Less than 10% of plastic waste is recycled globally, and in the U.S., that number drops to 5%-6%. Most of it ends up in landfills, oceans or burned, but consumers are demanding better options. A total of 82% say they're willing to pay more for sustainable packaging, with Gen Zers at 90%.

In fact, vague labels on products and packaging that can't be recycled do more long-term damage, lowering trust, costing companies sales and even stirring up public backlash.

For entrepreneurs, the path forward is embedded in making circular solutions from the beginning — everything from packaging choices and the circular systems around them to honest and transparent communication.

Materials like aluminum, which can be recycled infinitely without losing quality, offer both credibility and efficiency. Just as important, clear instructions about how to recycle or reuse packaging help customers follow through and reinforce confidence in the brand. Creating closed-loop solutions will ensure products don't just get put in a recycling bin but the material actually remains in the system.

When businesses take this approach, packaging can stop being a cost center and become a growth driver, building stronger brands, deeper loyalty and long-term profitability. Here's how.

Related: Going Green Can Save You Money and Attract Top Talent — 3 Essential Ways to Become More Eco-Friendly

The real solution to plastic waste isn't recycling — it's packaging

Each year, 52 million metric tons of plastic waste are produced globally, and despite global promises and decades of recycling campaigns, the harsh reality is that less than 10%

of plastic waste is recycled worldwide. This gap is not due to the lack of public interest in recycling but in the design realities of plastics themselves: most are created for single use, are combined with materials that are not recyclable, and are cheaper to produce from virgin petrochemicals than from recycled content.

To overcome these challenges, entrepreneurial leaders must go beyond vague labels and traditional, linear economic models. True success — and even growth — for businesses comes from prioritizing circularity, which starts in the materials we choose. Take Eva NYC: When they moved from plastic to aluminum packaging for its masstige hair care products, they saw a 100% spike in orders in just the first two weeks!

Packaging made from infinitely recyclable materials — such as metals — boasts recycling rates that often exceed 70% and saves up to 95% of the energy required to produce new metals from raw materials. Companies like Trivium Packaging provide metal packaging solutions that are well-positioned for a circular economy, as metal is 100% recyclable without any loss of quality, and is easily sorted among waste due to its magnetic properties. In addition, because metals are so widely used, there is a high demand for metal scrap, which increases the incentives for collection and recycling. That means metal stays in the loop, enabling a circular economy.

Another option is glass, which is more energy-intensive, but it does not degrade after reprocessing. For businesses, the focus should be on investing in packaging that is not just theoretically recyclable but is actually collected, processed and repurposed at scale.

Related: How Your Business Can Unpack and Prioritize Sustainability Through Recycling

Transparency drives trust, profit and brand loyalty

Clear, simple labeling is one of the most powerful ways brands can support customers and build loyalty. Instead of relying on a generic recycling symbol, instructions like *“rinse before recycling”* or *“check locally”* help prevent contamination and build consumer trust.

And through the Metal Recycles Forever label initiative, consumers are reminded that every can, tin or aluminum package they place in the recycling stream comes back in a new form.

That clarity pays off. Public Inc.’s Conscious Consumer report found that vague messaging is the number one barrier in retail, with 50% of shoppers abandoning products that lack clear labeling, and among highly conscious consumers, that number spikes to 87%.

On the flip side, when brands are transparent, they win both loyalty and revenue. For almost 90% of consumers, trust is the number one reason they’ll pay more, and loyal customers spend 67% more than new ones. Even a modest 5% increase in retention can drive profits up by 25%.

Clarity builds trust, and trust builds growth.

The circular movement requires systems and policy support

In a traditional linear model, products are designed for single use, materials are discarded rather than recovered, and value is lost at every step. As a result, only 6.9% of materials are cycled back into the global economy. Circular systems, on the other hand, prioritize keeping materials in use for as long as possible. This approach doesn’t just reduce waste; it creates new opportunities for growth and builds

consumer trust.

When businesses invest in circular packaging solutions, it provides consumers with sustainable options that require minimal effort. Consumer habits are hard to break, which is why companies need to play a role in offering convenient solutions that don’t rely on major behavior change. A good example comes from KOPU Water, which shifted to premium aluminum bottles and paired them with a recycling service for hotels and resorts. The company created a closed-loop system for their hotel partners where bottles are collected, recycled and reintroduced into circulation.

Just as important, businesses must advocate for industry-wide policy change that addresses the full lifecycle of packaging — creating the infrastructure and standards needed for circularity to succeed at scale. In Europe, the Packaging and Packaging Waste Regulation (PPWR) helps to drive innovation in circular design and create a playing field where sustainability isn’t optional. It’s *required.*

By implementing closed-loop systems, companies can significantly decrease waste, advance sustainability goals and make responsible business practices the norm rather than the exception.

Related: 3 Ways We Can Help Eliminate Waste by Creating a Circular Economy

Recycling alone isn’t enough

The real opportunity for business leaders is to treat packaging as a growth strategy, not just a compliance box to check. Prioritizing clear labels, circular materials and policies that support recycling infrastructure helps to build stronger brands and more resilient businesses.

Entrepreneurs who act now will be ahead of the curve. They’ll

win consumer trust and tap into a growing market willing to pay for products that keep their promises. In the end, sustainable packaging can be a real lever to lead the market in a way that creates lasting value for both the business and the planet.

Key Takeaways

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Despite the familiar “chasing arrows” symbol stamped on labels and packaging, the reality is stark: Less than 10% of plastic waste is recycled globally, and in the U.S., that number drops to 5%-6%. Most of it ends up in landfills, oceans or burned, but consumers are demanding better options. A total of 82% say they’re willing to pay more for sustainable packaging, with Gen Zers at 90%.

In fact, vague labels on products and packaging that can’t be recycled do more long-term damage, lowering trust, costing companies sales and even stirring up public backlash.

For entrepreneurs, the path forward is embedded in making circular solutions from the beginning — everything from packaging choices and the circular systems around them to honest and transparent communication.

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5 Critical Mistakes New Business Owners Make After Formation That Put Their Personal Assets at Risk

Opinions expressed by Entrepreneur contributors are their own.

This article is part of the America's Favorite Mom & Pop Shops series. Read more stories

Key Takeaways

- Turning your idea into a legal business is a big milestone — but it comes with hidden pitfalls many founders overlook.
- Avoiding a few common missteps early on can protect your assets, save you money, and set you up for sustainable growth.

Incorporation is a huge milestone — it's that thrilling moment when your idea becomes *real*. You've picked the name, filled out the paperwork and now your business is official. It's exciting, empowering and a little intimidating too.

But what *is* incorporation, exactly?

In simple terms, incorporation is the process of turning your business into a legal entity – typically a corporation or an LLC (Limited Liability Company). That means your business becomes separate from *you*. It can open its own bank account, sign contracts, hire employees and—most importantly – it usually protects your personal assets from business liabilities.

In other words, if your business gets sued, your personal finances (like your house, car or savings) are typically off-limits.

It's a smart move for founders who are serious about growth. And while incorporation sets the legal foundation, it's just the first step toward building a business that lasts.

In our experience helping thousands of entrepreneurs form and grow their businesses, we've noticed a pattern. Many founders assume that once they've filed their formation paperwork, the hard part is over. In reality, what you do next matters just as much – if not more.

Here are five common mistakes to watch out for after incorporating – and how to avoid them.

Related: I've Helped Build and Sell Companies Worth Many Millions. Here are the Top 50 Mistakes I've Seen Kill Startups.

1. Thinking incorporation automatically protects you

Filing your LLC or corporation creates a layer of legal protection between your business and your personal assets. That's a big deal. But here's the catch: that protection isn't automatic or permanent.

If you don't maintain your entity properly, a court could

decide that your business is just a shell — and hold *you* personally liable anyway. This is called "piercing the corporate veil," and it's something you definitely want to avoid.

Here's how to keep your protections strong:

- **Keep internal documents updated.** LLCs should have an operating agreement; corporations need bylaws. These documents outline how your business is run — even if you're a one-person show. You don't file them with the state, so they're easy to forget. But in a lawsuit, they could help prove your business is legit.
- **Don't mix business and personal finances.** If you're paying for groceries out of your business account (or vice versa), that blurs the line between you and your company. Open a separate business bank account and keep the books clean.
- **Stay in good standing with the state.** Most states require you to file annual or biennial reports. If you miss these deadlines, your business can fall out of compliance or even be dissolved. That puts your liability protection at risk.

As your business grows, the stakes get higher. Think of your legal structure like a house: incorporation builds the frame, but you need to maintain it to keep it standing.

2. Listing yourself as your own registered agent

Nearly every state requires you to list a registered agent — someone who can receive legal and government documents on your business's behalf. A lot of first-time founders just list themselves, assuming it's the simplest solution.

But here's why that's usually not a great idea:

- **You give up your privacy.** Acting as your own registered agent means your home or office address is published in the state's public database. That record sticks around — forever. Even after your business dissolves.
- **You could be served in front of clients.** If your business is ever sued, a process server will deliver legal documents to your registered agent. If that's you — and it happens during business hours — it could be a very awkward (and damaging) moment.
- **You'll miss out on support as you grow.** Professional registered agent services (like ours at Registered Agents Inc.) do a lot more than just accept mail. We can automatically file your annual reports, send compliance reminders and help you expand into other states when the time comes.

Bottom line: Saving a few bucks upfront by acting as your own registered agent can end up costing you more — in stress, privacy and lost opportunities.

3. Ignoring tax elections (and missing potential savings)

This one's a bit technical, but hang with us — because it could save you real money.

When you form an entity, the IRS gives your business a default tax classification:

- LLCs are taxed as pass-through entities — profits go to the owners, who pay taxes on their personal returns (including a 15.3% self-employment tax)
- Corporations (C-Corps) pay a corporate tax on profits (currently 21%) and then shareholders pay again on dividends — what's known as "double taxation"

But here's what many founders don't realize: you can often choose a different tax treatment by filing a form with the

IRS.

One of the most popular choices for LLCs is the S-Corp election. It lets you split your business income between:

- A reasonable salary (which is subject to payroll tax), and
- Dividends, which are not subject to self-employment tax

If your business is turning a healthy profit, the S-Corp election can lower your tax burden significantly.

Just know, S-Corps come with added complexity, like setting up payroll and staying compliant with IRS rules. But if you're ready to grow, these steps can actually position you to scale more efficiently.

4. Waiting too long to secure your domain name

You've brainstormed a name. Checked availability in your state. Filed the paperwork.

But – did you grab the domain?

Far too many founders wait to buy their domain until they "need" a website. And by then, it might be gone – or worse, someone may try to sell it back to you at a steep markup.

Here's why it's smart to act early:

- Your business name might be available in your state, but not as a domain. If that's the case, you may want to rethink the name before you commit.
- "Parking" a domain protects your brand. Even if you're not ready for a website, buying your domain ensures competitors or impersonators can't grab it.
- You'll get a professional email address. This adds instant credibility and protects your personal email

from spam or customer inquiries.

Pro tip: Consider buying domain variations like .net, .com or common misspellings to safeguard your brand from lookalike sites down the road.

5. Assuming your business name is fully protected

Just because your state lets you register a name doesn't mean you own it everywhere.

Unless you've filed for a federal trademark, someone in another state – or even in the same state – can legally use your business name, especially if they operate in a different industry or file a DBA ("doing business as").

Trademark protection gives you exclusive rights to use your business name (and logo, slogan, etc.) in your category across the entire country.

But here's the catch: you can't file for a trademark until you're actually using the name to sell something. And the process can take months.

That's why it's smart to:

- Start researching potential trademarks early
- Check for conflicts before investing in branding or marketing
- Decide whether you'd still want a name you can't protect

Many business formation services (ours included) offer trademark support or can connect you with a specialist to help you navigate the process.

Related: **Planning Your 2025 Strategy? Don't Make These 5 Critical Mistakes**

The real work begins now

Filing your incorporation documents is a huge achievement. But what comes next will determine whether your business simply exists or thrives.

To grow with confidence, you'll need to:

- Keep your business compliant and in good standing
- Understand your tax options and make informed decisions
- Protect your brand – online and legally
- Set up systems that support scalability from the start

When those pieces are in place, you'll be free to focus on what really matters: building the business you dreamed about when you started this journey

Key Takeaways

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76-Year-Old Billionaire Ray Dalio Wants People to Ask Him Questions on Social Media So He Can Train His AI Clone

Key Takeaways

- Billionaire Ray Dalio, 76, has been working on creating an AI clone since 2024.
- In posts on X and LinkedIn on Wednesday, Dalio asked users to send him questions about gold.
- Dalio said the questions and his responses would be used to train his AI clone.

Ray Dalio, the 76-year-old billionaire founder of hedge fund Bridgewater Associates, is opening the floor to questions — to train his AI clone.

Dalio took to social media on Wednesday to invite questions about gold as an investment. In identical posts on LinkedIn and X, Dalio wrote that he would answer user questions left in

the comments to “educate” his AI clone. According to *Business Insider*, Dalio has been developing his AI clone since 2024 to make his coaching and mentorship available to a wider audience.

“I’m using the questions I get and my answers to them to educate my AI clone, so it’s helpful to know what questions people have,” Dalio wrote in the posts.

Related: ‘The Best Advice That I Could Give Anybody’: Billionaire Ray Dalio Credits One Daily Habit With All of His Success

> *While I have been explaining for some time my thinking about gold (I like it) and debt assets (I don’t like them) as storeholds of wealth in the context of how the world order is changing, now that gold is hotter than AI stocks (and the meme is now changing to recognize that it…*
>
> *— Ray Dalio (@RayDalio) October 15, 2025*

His X post saw over 200 replies within its first hour, with 476 responses at the time of writing. Meanwhile, his LinkedIn post had 87 comments as of press time.

In the X and LinkedIn comments, users asked Dalio a variety of questions about investing in the precious metal.

“What is the best form to invest in gold, and any recommended platforms?” one user asked on LinkedIn.

“How safe is it to buy a gold-backed ETF? Should I invest in physical gold instead?” another asked on X.

Related: Billionaire Ray Dalio Just Sold His Last Shares in the Hedge-Fund Firm He Founded. Here’s Why He’s ‘Thrilled About It.’

Dalio has not responded to any questions as of the time of

writing, nor has he indicated how many questions he plans to address.

Ray Dalio, founder of Bridgewater Associates. Photo by Jemal Countess/Getty Images for TIME

Dalio has long been in favor of gold as part of an investment portfolio. Earlier this month, at the Greenwich Economic Forum, he recommended allocating around 15% of a portfolio to gold, describing it as especially effective in turbulent economic times and periods of high inflation. Gold prices have reached record highs recently, reaching $4,226.20 per troy ounce on Wednesday.

“Gold is a very excellent diversifier in the portfolio,” Dalio said at the forum. “If you look at it just from a strategic asset allocation perspective, you would probably have something like 15% of your portfolio in gold… because it is one asset that does very well when the typical parts of the portfolio go down.”

Dalio is worth $19.2 billion, per the Bloomberg Billionaires Index. He made his fortune by founding Bridgewater Associates, a hedge fund with $92 billion in assets under management as of March.

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