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## Quotes

*"My grandad gives me an honest opinion on the games and my performance. I really respect him for that. He's really helped me develop as a person and a player, and he's always been honest with me, whether I've had a good or bad game, where I need to improve."*

~Millie Bright

*"I surround myself, not with yes men, but people who have their own ideas and are on board with what I want to do."*

~Chris Coleman

*"I try to stay away from yes-men in my crew of immediate friends and peers. You got people that will tell you you're the greatest ever, but I need people that can tell me where I need to improve. I can respect the honest opinion."*

~Raheem DeV Vaughn

*"One of the worries about [leadership] is that everybody tells you yes. Nobody helps you figure out where your blind spots are."*

~John Dickerson

*"As you become more senior in your career, it can be thin at the top - It's harder and harder to get unbiased and direct feedback"*

## Bobbleheads

You don't see them much anymore, but bobbleheads used to be all the rage.

Can't you picture them -- the miniature figurines with little bodies and big heads? They were fashioned after athletes, movie characters, and more.

What put the wobble in the bobble, though, was the coil that attached the body to the head. Because each head rested gently on a spring, it bounced at the slightest movement. And, more likely than not, the motion was a continual up-and-down until momentum died and the bobbling head came to rest again.

It's funny. There's a great challenge for leaders (for all of us, actually) to be careful about surrounding ourselves with the human equivalent of bobbleheads. Yes, they may be very pleasing to have around, but their presence also can usher in danger for the leader and for the team.

So, join me for this month's edition of **EA Insights**. Let's explore what happens when we become bobblehead collectors. I hope this piece encourages you to restrict any bobbleheads you do have to the car or a curio.

All the best,

*June*

June Melvin Mickens  
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## Beware of "Yes" Men

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"Yes" men...or women...it doesn't matter.

Do you *know* one? Do you *have* one? Are you one?

As I work with organizations and leaders, a significant challenge that I run into is a culture filled with a bunch of nodding heads, or agreeing words, and sometimes little more. Picture bobbleheads.

Now, lest you think that I'm advocating conflict for conflict's sake, please press pause. There's a big difference between a "yes" that's based in actual concurrence and one that's delivered out of expectation. So, let me share four reasons why relying solely, or largely, on a nodding "yes" head may do you, the nodding one, and all around you a disservice.

**When you gravitate to the "yes" crowd, you...  
Miss out on a diversity of perspectives and ideas.**

No two of us have the same background or set of experiences. Our perspectives differ. Our minds develop ideas in unique and wonderful ways. When we cultivate a culture of parrots or pleasers, however, we, and the group as a whole, plug the wellspring of exposure and thinking that could be a valuable part of innovating, understanding the internal and external environment, and advancing the collective mission.

**When you gravitate to the "yes" crowd, you...  
Aren't challenged to check biases and blind spots.**

Very seldom do I have a 360° assessment debrief that does not end with the subject receiving a revelation of some sort from those who provided feedback through the instrument. The "I didn't know." or "They didn't tell me." response exposes that the people around the assessment subject may not feel free at all times to share their true observations with him or her. While feedback here is given through a tool administered annually or on some other schedule, the daily give-and-take that allows for real-time checking of biases and pinpointing of blind spots is absent. Not only does that void of honest and open communication hurt the leader, it can impact more broadly the decisions and actions that occur in the period between opportunities for assessment honesty.

**When you gravitate to the "yes" crowd, you...  
Stifle others.**

An environment of "yes" limits real growth of those on the team. Although it is possible to "yes" one's way up through the ranks, *elevation* is not necessarily synonymous with *growth*. The former relates to rank; the latter relates to development. Opportunities to discover one's potential and to test and advance often are not present in yes-focused environments. As a result, spirits that once were poised to soar either have their wings clipped or they take flight elsewhere. Either way, the stifling leaves the yes-focused group with a void.

**When you gravitate to the "yes" crowd, you...  
Foster an arrogant leadership style.**

Leaders often tout an open-door, honest talk policy...and that's good. Yet, far more important than talking points is daily experience. When other people's ideas are shut down or people are penalized (overtly or covertly) for speaking up, you communicate in a manner that is contrary to the official statement. What's the message? You -- the leader -- expect a "yes" ...or else. In this way, your unspoken message is that you are right, and well.... And, not only does this become the way you function, it also is the style that you perpetuate among those of influence within your organization and to any place else your protégés move in the future.

So, "yes" definitely is a welcomed response. However, when out of control, it has the possibility of hurting all that you are attempting to accomplish on an individual, and on an organizational, scale.

How is your leadership these days? Are you establishing a practice of engaging in honest conversations and receiving wise counsel -- not only from a mentor or coach but also through timely and open feedback from those around you? If you're not sure where you stand, or if you know that this area's uncomfortable for you, call on us at **Executive Advantage**. Let us help you work through what you're facing personally and/or organizationally in order to expand the benefit you can derive from the wealth of insight in your midst. [Contact us today.](#)



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*when making decisions. You want people who will speak truth to power. Say no to any 'yes men or women' on your personal board. When you face a personal crossroads, you need honest advisors."*  
~Margo Georgiadis

*"I don't want any yes-men around me. I want everybody to tell me the truth even if it costs them their job."*  
~Samuel Goldwyn

*"You know, my family and friends have never been yes-men: 'Yes, you're doing the right thing, you're always right.' No, they tell me when I'm wrong, and that's why I've been able to stay who I am and stay humble."*  
~LeBron James

*"The best thing is to always keep honest people around, because when you have a bunch of yes men around that know that you're making a mistake but let you go on with it, that's when it ruins your mind state as an artist."*  
~Kendrick Lamar

*"I don't like being surrounded by yes men."*  
~Brad Paisley

*"I give my honest opinion, whether it's right or wrong, but it's an opinion that I'll make."*  
~Paul Pierce