

THE 5 HIDDEN COMMUNICATION MISTAKES THAT KEEP YOUR TEAM DEPENDENT ON YOU

And What to Say Instead to Build Ownership, Confidence, and Initiative

By Sjoerd | The Value Architects



Introduction

You started your business for freedom. But somewhere along the way, your team became more dependent on you, not less.

Every decision comes back to you. Every crisis lands on your desk. And if you're honest, you're still the glue holding everything together.

This guide is for visionary CEOs and founders who are ready to stop being the bottleneck and start leading a team that thinks—and acts—independently.

In this short but powerful resource, I'll show you 5 subtle communication mistakes that undermine your team's ownership, initiative, and confidence.

And more importantly, I'll show you what to say instead.

Let's begin.

1. Giving Orders Instead of Framing Ownership

What happens: Your team waits for you to tell them what to do.

The hidden damage: You create compliance, not commitment. They complete tasks, but don't think strategically.

What to say instead:

"What's your plan for handling this?"

"If this were your department, what would you do?"

Why it works: This invites initiative and critical thinking. It puts the responsibility back where it belongs; on the team.

2. Answering Every Question

What happens: You become the walking FAQ machine.

The hidden damage: You reinforce dependency. Your team never learns to solve problems or make decisions.



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What to say instead:

“What do you recommend?”

“What have you already tried?”

Why it works: It prompts reflection, ownership, and builds confidence in their own problem-solving skills.

3. Assuming Silence Means Understanding

What happens: You give instructions. They nod. Then things fall apart.

The hidden damage: Misunderstandings go unnoticed until they cost time, money, or clients.

What to say instead:

“Can you walk me through how you’ll approach this?”

“What’s your first step?”

Why it works: It confirms alignment and uncovers gaps before they become issues.

4. Only Giving Feedback When It’s Wrong

What happens: You correct mistakes, but rarely praise progress.

The hidden damage: People fear failure. They play it safe. Creativity and innovation die.

What to say instead:

“Here’s what I appreciated about how you handled that.”

“That decision showed real ownership; well done.”

Why it works: Recognition reinforces initiative. People repeat what gets acknowledged.

5. Fixing Things Yourself

What happens: You jump in to ‘help’ and end up doing it yourself.

The hidden damage: You rob your team of growth. They become passive. You stay overworked.

What to say instead:

“I’ll support you, but I want you to lead this.”

“You’ve got this—let me know what support you need.”

Why it works: It sends a message of trust and raises the bar of expectation.



NEXT STEP: Ready to Build a Self-Managing Team?

If these communication shifts resonated with you, imagine what your business could look like with:

- A team that takes full ownership.
- A company that grows without you being involved in every detail.
- The space to finally lead strategically.

Let's make that your reality.

Book a Free Value Discovery Call with The Value Architects™ to explore how we help CEOs build self-thinking teams and regain their freedom.

<https://calendly.com/sjoerdm/25min?month=2025-08>

BONUS: You'll also get early access to my upcoming book:
The CEO-Parent: Self-Thinking Teams, Confident Leaders

About the Author

Sjoerd Maas is a strategic advisor, leadership coach, and founder of The Value Architects. He works closely with scale-up founders and CEOs who feel stuck—not because they lack vision, but because their business still runs through them. His mission: to help founder-dependent companies become self-thinking, value-driven organizations.

With over 15 years of experience guiding high-growth businesses, Sjoerd has developed a sharp eye for where true value is created—in trust, clarity, and ownership. He is the creator of The Value Acceleration Method™, a practical framework for helping leaders shift from being the engine of the company to the architect of its growth. His work helps businesses scale without chaos, by building systems that don't rely on the founder's daily involvement.

But this book isn't just about business. It's personal.

As a father of two young children, Sjoerd discovered that the most powerful leadership lessons came not from the boardroom—but from bedtime routines, playground conflicts, and parenting books. Inspired by *How to Talk So Kids Will Listen* and backed by insights from neuroscience and *Scaling Up*, he realized that the skills required to raise confident kids are the same skills that build confident teams.

In *The CEO Parent*, Sjoerd blends years of executive experience with the everyday reality of parenthood to offer a fresh, honest look at modern leadership. It's a book about building something bigger than yourself—without losing yourself in the process.

Sjoerd lives in Rotterdam with his wife and two children. He's passionate about strategy, systems, and making fires on family road trips—ideally all in the same week.

