Many people believe that aggressive, manipulative psychopaths do well in competitive environments and also succeed in management where they are seen as ‘strong powerful leaders’. Yet recent research shows that psychopathic leaders are poor managers who alienate their team members because they are unable to collaborate and are often unethical.

A recent study led by Leanne ten Brinke at the University of Denver investigated the success of individuals with psychopathic tendencies in the area of financial investment. Their study found that those managers with higher than average psychopathy scores, based on their nonverbal behaviours, earned 0.88% less each year, compared with a manager who displayed less psychopathic behaviours. Also, managers with narcissistic tendencies did less well when compared with their less narcissistic counterparts.

Nick Hobson, a writer for Psychology Today suggests that we are all remarkably skilled at detecting the presence of certain troublesome personality traits just by observing a person for a few seconds. He suggests that this happens on an unconscious level, which means that many of these judgments come through hunches that an individual cannot be trusted. Paying attention to those hunches is extremely important!
