

# BIG IDEA

## Nanomanagement

The word is almost as unnecessary as what it connotes – extreme micro-management – yet it was used as a glorifying self-attribution by serial entrepreneur Elon Musk. And it is true, many highly effective top managers have amazing gifts of attention to detail, which they revel in. But they can also be like idiot savants, coming across as naive, uncaring or just inept when it comes to people and relationships.

Many a nanomanager misreads the play by ball-watching. Fred Goodwin was a gifted auditor whose forensic skills and deal-making as boss of RBS made it briefly the largest bank in the world. His strategy was for the bank not to have a strategy but to 'make it happen', which it did brilliantly until its strategic myopia yielded spectacular failure.

Such leaders appeal to boards because they seem highly effective, but to succeed they need selfinsight and self-control, plus strong countervailing voices. Unfortunately, power stops them seeing this.

➤ To see Nigel Nicholson's book, *The 'I' of Leadership: Strategies for seeing, being and doing* (Jossey-Bass), go to [iofleadership.com](http://iofleadership.com)

