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## **Good Boss / Bad Boss**

### Where do you fit on the scale?

by Larry Mandelberg

Lists have become a popular tool for communicating the best and the worst. From Letterman's irreverent perspectives on current affairs to the best dressed, one place no one wants to see their name is on the list of the worlds worst bosses.

Every year I marvel at the creative ways bosses can be brutal in their rule. (...and yes, employees can be cruel as well.) Unfortunately most bosses, supervisors, and managers are much more subtle than the high profile leaders that make headlines. They torment their employees by being overly emotional, keeping details secret, underpaying, overworking, and being just plain rude. This behavior is often born out of fear and trying to hide their lack of self confidence. If you could find out what your staff truly thinks of you as a boss, would they put you on their list of 'world's worst bosses'?

As in all relationships, success is a two way street. It takes two to tango, and the more friction and frustration between the boss and their direct reports, the faster relationships can deteriorate until both are miserable. Whether you are a boss or an employee, you are largely to blame if you aren't happy at work.

If you are a boss, supervisor, or manager, there are many simple things you can do to improve your relationship with your employees and make everyone's life easier, including your own.

- Emotion does not belong in the work place. When you get emotional, you're demonstrating a lack of self-control. How can anyone respect you if you go flying off the handle when things go wrong? How can you instill any confidence in others that way? When you feel yourself starting to boil, take a few moments to get your thoughts together. Take 3 deep breaths and reflect on the situation. Ask yourself just exactly how serious it is. Let your emotions build...and settle. Before you go back and talk to anyone, make sure you can do it without anger, yelling, or any other emotional signs of being out of control. There is no faster way to lose their respect as a leader.
- Insults serve no productive purpose. Being rude or insulting to someone might make you feel good, but all it will do for them is create embarrassment, resentment, and anger - not the emotions you want to stimulate. Remember to praise them, all of them, even if you have to search for something good to day. A little bit of praise goes a long way, even if your appreciation is already known. Besides, it won't kill you, so what harm can it do?
- Don't expect perfection, people are humans and humans make mistakes, so deal with it. When was the last 24 hour period of time when you were perfect? If you have staff that never makes mistakes, you have staff that isn't trying very hard. It's not a good sign no matter how you try to spin it. People will make mistakes; that is a fact so embrace it. Let them know you don't expect perfection, you expect honesty, hard work and diligence. Once again, a little bit of sugar helps the medicine go down.

- Remember people are individuals, they are different. Expecting everyone to be like you is unrealistic.

If you have a difficult boss, supervisor, or manager, there are a few important things you need to do to improve your relationship with them and make both your life and theirs more pleasant.

- Confront your boss when they act inappropriately, don't be afraid. Talk to them without being aggressive or insulting. Approach them calmly and patiently. Be honest and tell them how you feel. It's easy to argue about what someone did or didn't do. It's much more difficult to argue with how you feel. Some will take it better than others. You may have to wait a few hours or a day to let the situation calm down. But don't let bad behavior go unrecognized. Not only will it hurt you, it will also hurt your fellow employees and the company.
- If your boss embarrasses you in front of others, don't look for payback, it won't happen. What you need to do is to quietly, calmly and privately tell your boss what they did and, yes, how it made you feel. Your boss needs to know, and if you won't tell them, who will?
- Always deal with your boss in a calm and controlled manner, never let yourself get emotional no matter what. If you find yourself losing control and wanting to smack something or someone, ask for a time out, or a break, and go someplace where you can gather yourself and calm down. Then return and finish the conversation.
- This one applies to you too. Nobody's perfect, so deal with it!

Every boss is a human being, and human beings have emotions. The boss often finds it difficult to put themselves in other people's shoes because they are under so much pressure to perform and avoid mistakes. For an employee, they can simply quit and go find another job, but for a boss, if things go wrong, often they are not just out of a job, they are broke too.

Put yourself in the other person's shoes and remember the Golden Rule. It applies to the much as much as it does to the employee

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