

Rose Consulting Group, Inc.

Client Newsletter

July 2004

Being a good boss probably isn't what you think. It doesn't mean being "perfect" or always being liked—most good bosses are flawed. But all are respected.

In our last newsletter we reported the results of our "best boss" survey of our readers. The results were not surprising to us since we have done such surveys in the past and seen first hand performance of the best bosses for years. The results were, as we found out, interesting and even somewhat counterintuitive to many of our readers.

In business literature there are many articles about ideal one-minute bosses, empowering bosses, sharing bosses, "we" bosses, all sharing one key trait – they are *perfect*. This may be a nice idea but in the real world we do not find perfect bosses – just the best.

Oddly enough, those best bosses are not even close to perfect. The people cited as "best bosses" sometimes micromanage, show a temper, get disorganized, give conflicting orders, etc. But those weaknesses are forgiven in light of the strengths they have – and everyone's best boss sounds pretty much alike in terms of those strengths.

Let's talk about those "best boss" strengths and how *you* can be that great boss that people will talk about for years to come. But first, let's answer a key question: What's in it for you?

This isn't a personality contest. Or is it?

A good manager may be cold on a personal level but still be respected. But in our experience, one thing is clear—a bad boss is rarely liked or respected. So what's the difference, really? Being a good boss is not a one-minute matter – in fact it is hard work!

Some people, often new managers, actually have that misguided "they have to do what I say or else" opinion. Experienced managers know better. So let's review some

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of the reasons you should want to be liked or at least respected by your people.

1. Your people can (and sometimes will) sabotage you – And this is no joke. One client who goes way back with us started his business career working on an automobile production line. At only 23 he made sure everyone knew that he was the big boss, should never be questioned, had the power to fire and all the answers—you get the picture.

He said the number of cars that rolled off the line with missing doors, the wrong chrome or caught fire when first started was amazing. Sure, his line looked bad, but who had to answer to the Plant Manager? And to make things right he had to do a lot of fence mending with those employees.

Even when not so blatant, your direct reports can harm you by simply not offering information. For example, who among us doesn't understand the importance of being hooked up to the company "grapevine"?

2. You look good when they look good—No one ever looked bad by receiving compliments on the quality of their staff. It shows you are a savvy hirer, a good coach, and leader. By hiring the right people and giving them your confidence, you will not only demonstrate respect for your employees, but you can also effectively "fill in the gaps" of your own skill set and work as though you have expertise in many other areas.

3. Employees will work harder if they feel that you have their interests at heart—Just like you, the people that work for you are looking for help advancing their careers. It's not all about salary. Surveys consistently show that workers care about reaching their personal career goals, improving themselves and feeling respected while they get there.

Yes, you might experience some turnover or attrition due to missed promotions, higher paying jobs, etc., but the number one reason people quit is because they don't like their boss.

4. People who work in a supportive environment will produce higher quality work—We don't mean lots of hand-holding or "atta-boys". We are talking about an attitude toward making mistakes. A good boss encourages mistakes because he or she understands that making mistakes comes along with taking risks, and taking risks results in improved skills and performance. This isn't easy—it means you must create an environment that views mistakes as opportunities, not something to fear. Doing this puts you ahead of your competition immediately.

Being a good boss is just the right thing to do – and, as you can see, it's also just good business.

So how do you get to be one of the "best bosses"?

Being seen as a good boss by your people is one of the things that savvy leaders have learned throughout their careers and work hard to attain. And there are some things you can do today to start down the road to being a better boss.

1. Actively listen—hearing is not listening; we hear all auditory input. Listening takes a lot of hard work. Your mind can process information three to four times faster than anyone can speak. Listening can get boring and it is easy to be distracted.

Listening means *focusing* on what the other person is saying, nodding, occasionally repeating part of what they have said, using phrases

like "I see" and other signs that you are listening. Listening encourages future communication. Good listening takes hard work and practice.

2. Praise in public, criticize in private—Crucial to creating a supportive, respectful culture is your being willing to admit your mistakes. This creates a work environment where raising questions and making mistakes are valued. And one in which praise and criticism are positive tools almost immediately.

3. Communicate, communicate, communicate—create an environment that fosters back and forth information sharing. Be clear on expectations, and make sure your employees know how to get there. Leaders who share information and communicate with their employees on a regular basis will breed loyal, happy employees who feel valued.

4. Show them the big picture – Here is something that may surprise you: you almost certainly have some people in your firm who really don't know what you do. Years ago, one of the authors worked in the sales department of an aircraft fastener company. The position involved interacting with various departments (engineering, purchasing, shipping, production line, etc.) Although her job really was sales, when asked what she did she typically answered, "My company is an aviation supplier, we make military and commercial airplanes." By being exposed to other aspects of the company business she took ownership of her job—she was proud of the role her company played in the bigger manufacturing picture.

5. Care about developing people—we work with many successful people and one of their universal traits is an honest concern

with developing their people. If you think of your employees as individuals you can work toward making their needs dovetail with that of the organization, increasing their satisfaction and helping them to excel.

6. Remember that loyalty is something you earn, not a personality trait—Clients will sometimes talk about wanting loyalty from their people and often ask if we can measure it. Some people are more likely to be loyal than others but for the most part you *earn* loyalty by being a good boss, and using the behaviors mentioned above.

It's easy for us to say, "Make your goal to be a leader, not a boss". But for every boss who comes by these behaviors naturally there are ten who have to practice, attend workshops, do extra reading or all of the above to get there. Don't be too hard on yourself. When you go to work tomorrow you will still be a flawed human being like all of us. You will have temperamental days, forgetful days, bad days in general. Yet if you can listen, try to help your people develop, show them the big picture, and let them know they are valued—you may still not be anywhere near perfect but you may be the best boss your employees ever had.

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