

What does a good boss look like?

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We speak about good bosses and bad bosses all the time... okay, no wait, we actually only speak about bad bosses all the time.

So just how do you recognise a good boss then if you've never had one and how do you be one if you don't know what one looks like?

One of the very cool things that you can do with NeuroLinguistic Programming (NLP) is take the characteristics and features that one person has and transfer those onto another person. For example, you want to be a hotshot salesman but the thought of making a cold call scares you to death? Well NLP can take the characteristics of a hotshot salesman you know and transfer them into you, giving you that set of capabilities in practically an instant.

The downside is that you need to know a hotshot salesman to begin with so that you can identify the characteristics you want to transfer.



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It's the same with being a good boss... if you've never seen or experienced one, well how do you know where to begin in order to be one?

What will *not* do

If you've been working you've had bosses and even if they have been bad you've still learnt from them - at least what not to do and how not to behave or alienate people. Most often, we find out what will do by first finding out what will not do.

What this means for you is that you can take the characteristics of bad bosses you've had over the years and by finding different or opposite ways to do things you can create a model for what good boss behavior should look like.

So start by thinking of the bad experiences you've had with bosses, for example:

- Being berated or belittled in front of peers
- Shaming employees or comparing them unfairly
- Name calling
- Fostering internal politics and favoritism
- Inducing fear
- Nit picking and clock watching

Now think about the kinds of reactions that these kinds of behaviours create among staff:

- Disengagement or not really participating as a productive member of the team, basically killing time until you can go home
- Holding back ideas
- Not putting passion or focus into work
- Fear of speaking out
- Avoidance of group and staff meetings
- Increased sick days and just about any excuse to not be in the office

Once you've created a comprehensive list, you can take that and compare it to yourself, how you behave as a boss and the kinds of reactions you're seeing in your staff.

This gives you a point of entry for understanding the kind of boss you need to be in your environment, with your particular set of staff.

You can also work through the list of negative characteristics and find alternate behaviours, e.g. My boss only ever berated me when calling me into his office can become I ensure that I invite people into my office for casual chats and positive experiences and rewards.

A model for good and great bosses

A good or great boss is going to vary from person to person and environment to environment, because honestly everyone needs to be managed differently.

There are however commonalities that many good bosses have in common.

• Communication and interaction

Whether or not you like it communication happens all the time; your choice is whether that communication is good or bad, positive or negative.

Good communicators will display characteristics like:

- Spending time talking positively with their staff about successes and rewards
- Spending time getting to know employees as individuals and having casual conversations with them
- Doling out recognition and compliments as often and easily as the negative stuff

If you only ever call your staff in to berate or chastise them they aren't going to want to talk to you and they are going to dread interactions and meetings with you.

• Approachability

We all like to think we have our doors open to staff and that they can approach us at any time, but do we really?

- Do you welcome staff when they come in to talk to you or chase them away because you're busy?
- Can staff approach you easily as stuff arises or do they need to set an appointment in advance to see you?
- Is your office space welcoming and comfortable? Can people sit comfortably or do they need to stand?
- Do people actually come in to your office to talk to you just because they're walking past and have something to say?

• Being part of the team

For many of us that are in a senior or management role, there are just things that we don't do anymore, because honestly it would be a waste of our time to attend to tasks like that.

However, that can also cause staff to think and feel that you aren't working with them, you aren't part of the team, or worse still that there's stuff that you're too good or precious to do.

So, if you feel you need to increase your team visibility, then you could try:

- Working hands-on with a staff member, training or mentoring them in a skillset you have
- Increase the time you spend in the office and make a point of being seen at other people's desks
- Make a point of spending time at the water cooler or making coffee so that you get the casual chat interactions with staff
- Let staff see you actively doing menial tasks such as carrying stuff
- Offer staff your help with projects and activities they're busy working on

Teambuilding activities can be an alternate option to try, but because they're once off they don't tend to stick. People will feel you're much more a part of the team if they see and feel you around in little increments on an ongoing basis.

• **Managing each member of the team individually**

Not every person feels and receives or even gives love in the same way - the same applies to managing people.

Each member of your team has different cues and triggers that will work for them. Some require the carrot and some the stick, some require public adulation and some financial reward.

What's important is that you understand each member of the team well enough to know how to manage him or her efficiently... without having to unpack his or her entire personality when it comes down to an issue or crisis because you haven't taken the time to get to know them before that.

• **Inspiration**

There's a good reason that coaches give pep talks before each game and during half time: because people can always use a healthy dose of inspiration. In fact, sometimes it's the only thing that keeps them moving forward and carrying on.

It doesn't have to be groundbreaking speech that you make, just a simple "thank you for the all hard work you guys are putting in" can make a huge difference to people's days.

Other themes you can try include:

- "We know you've been working hard on this project and we want to thank you for all the extra time and effort we know you've put in."
- "I know we aren't seeing results yet, but that happens sometimes. Just hang in there; I can feel this is about turn."
- "With any great risk there's an equal chance of failure and success. Maybe we've lost this round, but we'll win the next one."

What's important with inspiration is that you tackle the bad stuff and the good stuff.

Take time to say thank you whenever you can find an excuse, but more importantly you need to identify when people are flat and down and tackle it - don't leave it to fester and take over the entire office space.

Sometimes, all it takes to lift the entire office's mood is a well-placed "hang in there", or even a short note sent out with an inspirational piece or article you've written.

The point is to keep the staff going and motivated and to keep their spirits up. Happier people are always more motivated and they achieve much greater levels of productivity.

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