

How to Work With a Micromanaging Boss

(<https://www.tlnt.com/how-to-work-with-a-micromanaging-boss/>)

If you haven't worked for a micromanager (<https://www.tlnt.com/are-you-in-danger-of-becoming-a-micromanager/>), you've heard about them. Employees buzz about these bosses over lunch, complain about them around the water cooler, and chew them up at the dinner table with their family.

At the worst situations, frustration leads to deep-seated resentment that triggers a job change or career move. (A Gallup study (<http://news.gallup.com/businessjournal/182321/employees-lot-managers.aspx>) of 7,272 US adults found that one in two left their job to get away from their manager.)

You may recognize this bad behavior from your boss: the game of Gotcha.”

Why they play “Gotcha”

These micromanagers never seem to focus on the perfect circle. Instead, their first comment calls attention to the inconsequential mistake. They ask for trivial back-up data that you failed to bring with you to the presentation. They imply that maybe you have misunderstood the politics surrounding the situation and therefore have written the email with a more aggressive tone than appropriate.

Rather than the positive *result* of your project, their focus in a meeting is always on your “failure” to distribute your project results to all the “correct” people.

These micromanagers may distrust you for any number of reasons: They fear you and fear losing control if they don't keep close watch on you. Their micromanaging may be an attempt to boost their self-esteem (<https://www.tlnt.com/dont-let-a-narcissistic-boss-poison-the-team/>) by lowering yours with tight controls, with threats that instill fear of firing, and with constant put-downs and corrections.

They feel frightened and out of control themselves, and frustrated at the increased workload their micromanaging causes.

So if you work for a micromanaging boss, your first two challenges: Develop trust and help your boss feel secure. Tall order. (Side-note: Distrust comes from faulty assumptions about other people's intentions.)

Antidotes to “Gotcha”

Practice direct communication. State directly (<https://www.tlnt.com/how-to-get-a-manager-to-stop-micromanaging-employees/>) what you need or want. No hinting. Be very explicit.

Ask questions. Listen carefully before you draw conclusions about the boss's intentions, motive, or assumptions.

Put things in writing. Ask for clarifications and approvals from your boss in writing.

Aim to have other people in the conversation when discussing important issues with your boss. When things go awry, have that same third-party around as you discuss the problem/issue/resolution.

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Look for ways to build trust in the relationship. Practice truth-telling. Doing what you say you will when you say you will. Being transparent in your actions often helps the boss feel safer to admit his/her own mistakes. Take every opportunity to let the boss know you are “on his/her team” and not an adversary.

Assume the responsibility with delegated projects. If your boss is a poor delegator and fails to communicate the essential elements of a project (the goal, the deliverables, the budget, the deadline, a required process to be followed), then take the lead and ask for those details. Neither of you are mind-readers and getting things “wrong” only cements the idea that you can’t be trusted. If the boss fails to delegate properly, take the lead and dig for the details.

Remember that micromanagement is most frequently about distrust and insecurity. Help the boss feel secure by demonstrating your competence at every level and being transparent with your intentions that you both succeed in the job.

This article originally appeared on the Booher Research Institute (<http://www.booheresearch.com/blog/>)blog.