

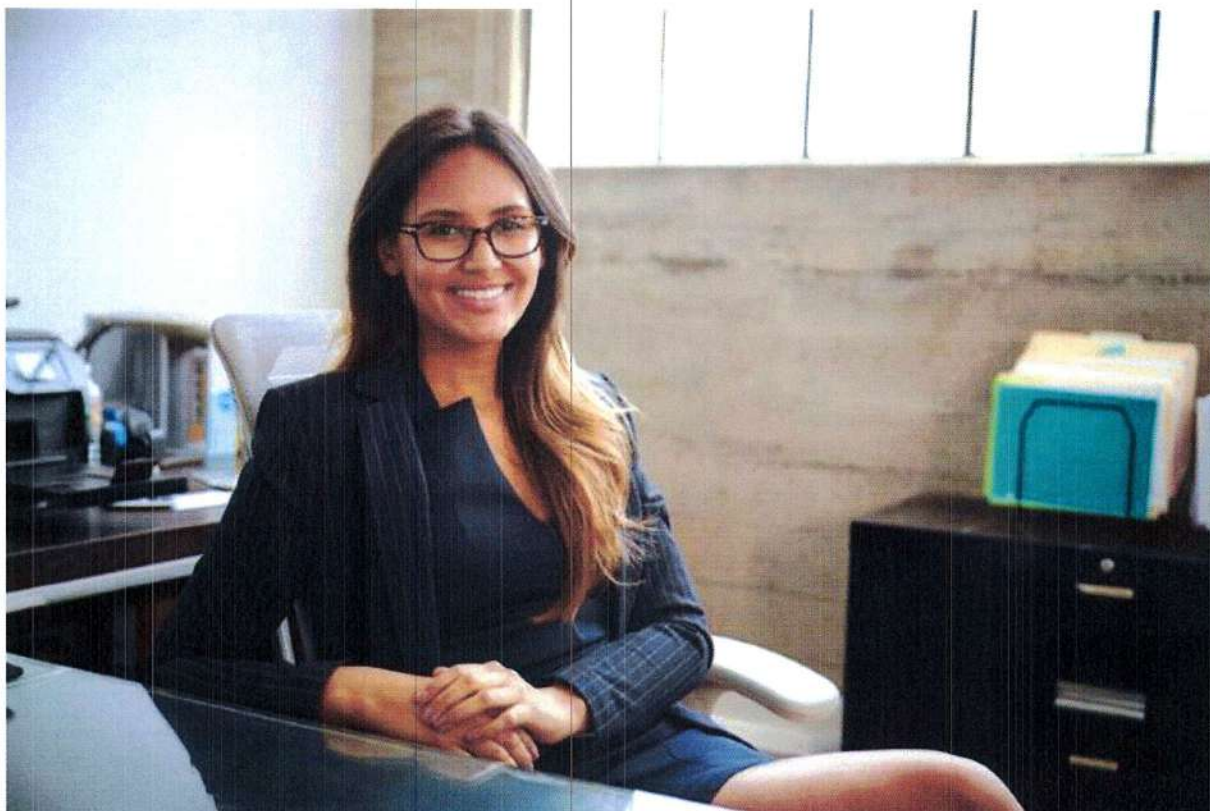
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How To Become A Better Boss



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How to become a better boss. ICLIPART

By Dianna Booher—

Nobody plans to become a bad boss. They become deficient by default. If you stay in the workforce longer than a couple of years, you'll either hear a bad-boss story or experience your own. Just as your car needs its 30,000

miles or 3-year maintenance check, maybe it's time for your personal communication check-up before a major foul-up.

Make Sure The Team Knows The Deliverables

In survey after survey, leaders report that their teams understand organizational goals and initiatives. Yet team members *themselves* say they do not.

In a worldwide Gallup poll among 550 organizations and 2.2 million employees, only 50 percent of employees “strongly agreed” that they knew what was expected of them at work. [see footnote] Obviously, the poll reflects a major gap in perception and reality.

Often leaders seem totally puzzled about this discrepancy. As a communication consultant, I've often been involved in a conversation with a senior executive, who has voiced his exasperation this way: “Our employee survey says they don't feel that the leadership team communicates often enough with them. But frankly, I don't know what else we can do! We put information everywhere. It's on the website, the intranet, the newsletter. We have a hotline they can call. Department heads have weekly staff meetings. Regional directors do quarterly simulcast for updates. There's information everywhere in all forms! What else can we do!”

From such a statement, this executive seems to be equating information with communication. And those two things are worlds apart.

The more times and the more layers that those goals need to travel through an organization, the more chances that things get lost in translation. The reasons vary: Inconsistency in the message. Inconsistency in enforcement of policies. Little or no accountability to actually meet the standards or deliver the stated outcomes.

But the results of such confused communication remains the same:
Disengagement and lowered productivity.

Guide With Strategic Questions

Strategic thinkers use leading questions to advance a discussion and their case. With a well-planned series of questions, you as a manager can lead a group or an individual to rethink their decision or proposal without a direct challenge to their ideas and without stating your position first (which discourages the team members from thinking for themselves).

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The beauty of this approach in team meetings? Once voiced, people buy their own data and reasoning as revealed in their answers to your questions.

Leadership by strategic questioning— although not a novel idea— builds a team member's self-confidence as well as proficiency.

Dislodge Log-Jamming Directives

Understandably, strong leaders want to make their mark on departmental operations, stamp their philosophical footprint, and leave their legacy on individual hearts. They hope their work will be innovative, pleasant, and profitable. After all, no leader intentionally creates a logjam!

All too often, however, *new* leaders (or seasoned leaders taking over in a new position) start out with directives or statements that set their team up for disappointment rather than the intended productivity boost and positive reaction. But despite the *intention*, the result is often delay, disengagement, disillusionment, and maybe even derision if these logjams become frequent.

Comments like this from a boss stop employees in their tracks: “I’d like to blow this up, and rebuild it from the ground up.” Or: “Let’s just put everything on hold until I get a better understanding of the process.” Or: “Check back with me before you make any final commitment on that purchase.”

Such log-jamming statements show lack of confidence and put the brakes on productivity. Granted, there may be a reason for a no-confidence vote, but issuing such directives *before* investigation simply “gums up the works.”

Become a Coach, Not a Critic

If you’ve ever played a sport, you can distinguish between your different reactions when you hear comments yelled from the sidelines or stands: The critic in the stands makes you feel like a moron. The coach on the sidelines encourages you to make the best play.

Ask any dieter which they prefer to help them lose weight—the coach or the critic. They’ll select the coach every time.

Ditto for the workplace. Coaches help team members identify their strengths. They provide resources, give helpful tips and techniques, and communicate clear standards to measure success. Most importantly, they provide a model, give clear feedback, offer encouragement, build confidence, provide stretch assignments, and celebrate wins.

Classify your conversations accordingly.

Bosses get better by design. Start with the above checklist.

[footnote] Harter, Jim, Ph.D. Chief Scientist, Workplace Management and Wellbeing for Gallup’s workplace management practice. *12: The Elements of*

Great Managing and Wellbeing: The Five Essential Elements. Source: Gallup Research. Opinion: September 28, 2015.

Dianna Booher is the bestselling author of 49 books. Her newest is [Communicate Like a Leader](#). She helps organizations communicate clearly. Follow her at BooherResearch.com and [@DiannaBooher](https://twitter.com/DiannaBooher).

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