



Being a Better Boss: Shifting your Perspectives

By Barry K. Zweibel

In the last issue of the Ticker, I wrote, somewhat derisively, how "bosses will be bosses" and what you, as a direct report, can do to better manage your relationship with your boss. In the name of fair play, this issue's article is about how you, as a boss, can be more effective with your direct reports.

Subtle (and sometimes not-so-subtle) shifts in your perspective can dramatically affect how others react and respond to you. As we change, so do those around us. Want your staff (and vendor contacts for that matter) to increase their value to you? It all starts with shifting your attitudes and perspectives.

Shift 1 - Acknowledge your human side - don't pretend you're perfect.

True, you are capable of sheer brilliance (you're the boss, after all). However, whether you see it or not, there are times when your staff sees another side of you, as well. So quit trying to be perfect and admit you're only human. The benefits are many:

- Admitting you're only human is a wonderful credibility builder for you. Bosses are respected for how well they see what's really going on, but the converse is also true. So, in a very real way, admitting you made a mistake or don't have a good answer to a tough question, or that you need help, makes people think more of you, not less. It demonstrates that they can trust you - you're not just another over-paid spinmeister.
- Admitting you're not perfect helps reduce the stress and strain of daily living. When you don't have to be perfect, your life gets easier. Just imagine a day of not trying to be "all things to all people" to get a feel for it.
- By being more realistic, you encourage your staff to be more realistic, too. It encourages your staff to strive for excellence instead of perfection. Excellence encourages learning. Excellence encourages growth. Excellence encourages honesty and openness. Perfectionism doesn't.

Shift 2 - Implement Unsolicited Updates - stop working so hard.

The implications of your staffs' reluctance to bring you bad news are obvious - the later you know about something, the less time you have to deal with it, the more likely it is that the cleanup gets messy and the more work for you. So instead of you having to find out what's going on, have it be your staffs' job to tell you.

- Tell your staff that it doesn't matter if it's good news or bad news as long as it's new news - and mean it. Offer incentives for timely reporting. Encourage them to tell you things that you might not already know. Share with them what is and what's not important for you to know - and work with them over time to enhance that understanding.
- Have them regularly fill you in - before you have to ask them. But don't insist they solve every problem they bring to you - that will only discourage them. Instead, use your time together as an opportunity to brainstorm, problem solve and interrelate. You'll find it to be an incredible timesaving and relationship-building form of communication.

Shift 3 - Delegate to develop your entire staff - quit over-relying on a chosen few.

A BIG mistake that managers make when delegating work is in assigning the good stuff to their favorite employees and dumping the rest on everyone else. If this is how you do it, CUT IT OUT! Instead, delegate based on who's most interested in learning what the assignment has to teach (of course, balanced with who has the appropriate skills). Then watch your staff work harder, more effectively, and more happily while you get what you need, as well.

- Learn what each employee is hoping to accomplish at this point in his/her career. Is it more technical expertise? Project management experience? Developing formal/informal leadership skills? Enhancing their interpersonal communications skills? Know what's important to them and talk about that.
- Talk in terms of how the specific assignment will directly benefit that employee and, oh-by-the-way, the customer and company, too. Does someone want to improve his or her customer service skills? Explain how this assignment can do just that. Discuss the possibilities that it holds for growth. If you make it relevant to the person you're talking to, resistance will decrease and enthusiasm will surge.
- Use what you now know about Unsolicited Updates to monitor progress.

Shift 4 - Practice the Platinum Rule - everyone is not the same.

We all know the Golden Rule: Treat others as we'd like to be treated ourselves. Yet, people are not all the same. They have different needs and wants and hopes and dreams. As a result, treating everyone the way YOU'D like to be treated may miss the mark entirely. Instead, shift to the Platinum Rule and treat others, as THEY'D like to be treated. You'll be amazed what happens.

[Shift 5 - Create your own developmental opportunities - don't just take what's offered to you.](#)

Management seminars submerge you in the material, but they often lack the relevance you need to make the learning stick. And while bosses help focus your learning, they rarely afford the time you'd like to really understand the lessons. Maybe that's why scores of high-performance employees (such as you) are now hiring coaches to maximize their personal and professional growth:

- With weekly, one-on-one, telephone conversations with a coach, the discoveries and insights are always about YOU - 100% customized to YOU.
- And, because the calls continue over a period of months, you get the time you need to deepen your learning and put it to proper use.

With the ROI and long-term benefits becoming more obvious to see, bosses are, with increasing frequency, paying for coaching services out of their own corporate training budgets. Maybe it's time for you to get a coach.

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