

How to Train your Boss

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It is safe to say that most supervisors, or other titled people who oversee staff, have not mastered the art and skill of managing. It follows that most employees under those bosses are managed inadequately. The odds are, therefore, that you are among those 'mismanaged' staff – and if so, you probably know it, or at least you may often sense it. A primary goal of career coaching is to assist you in getting closer to full job satisfaction. The means, illustrated via this paper, lies in the process of training your boss.

So, what can you do about a woeful supervisory predicament? We recommend that you immediately stop criticizing your boss and take control of the situation. We suggest that you train your boss how to manage. The notes that follow show you how. There is only one caveat: never allow your boss to know that you are doing the training; never let anyone know.

From a human behavior perspective, following this process involves taking responsibility for your boss' lack of action or direction. It does not involve manipulating, but it does involve being proactive and setting boundaries. Such training should be done discretely and always you should avoid taking credit for the results achieved – bask in the enjoyment of a better workplace for yourself but do not indulge for one second in glory. Your own performance will improve; that should be reward enough.

Step 1: Clean up your own act first

You may want to improve your boss, but what about your own grade as a supervisor? Check it out by reviewing the nine steps that follow. Make sure you put these in place as a habit for your treatment of the staff that reports to you or are at least putting them in place before you begin on your boss.

Step 2: Learn to write inoffensively

An entire paper could be devoted on how to write memos and emails inoffensively to not only your boss, but to anyone. Strident memos (read most memos) rarely get the results intended; instead they often engender a negative reaction. Some quick avoidance rules for your emails are:

- i. Remove the word 'you'; it is accusatory
- ii. Remove emotional or stressing words; they're subtle but a dime a dozen. ("I have frequently noticed this" should be: "I have noticed this".)
- iii. Use facts, numerical items, not generalities. (Instead of "It is forever breaking down" say "In the past week, it has broken down three times." Also, this is a chance to illustrate another example of avoiding emotional stressing word such as "alone". "In the past week alone, it has broken down three times". Ugh!)
- iv. Never, ever exaggerate
- v. Don't use others to justify your case against the individual ("Gary has noticed this habit of yours as well.")
- vi. Wait 24 hours before you send the memo
- vii. Have a peer read it before you send it
- viii. The truth is not necessarily 'good for you'. Do not be a sanctimonious truth-monger. Instead deal with issues in a non-hurtful way.
- ix. Generalize away from an individual to a group.
- x. Take blame even when you know you are not to blame. ("Perhaps, I might do this myself as well".)
- xi. Avoid 'always', 'never', etc.

Remember very little is achieved by putting someone down, intentionally or non-intentionally. What you usually want to do in a memo is to engineer a successful change of behavior. You are not trying to make yourself look better but to make the situation

improve for everyone. Avoid defensiveness, justification, etc. Stick to the facts.

Step 3: Analyze your boss

If you are able, determine your boss' PAVF character and deal with your superior according to the notes provided by CCI and its sister organization CCCC in other publications. Apply the knowledge to accommodate each of P, A, V and F personalities and each of their different fears, ways of responding and behaving.

Step 4: Analyze yourself

If you are able, share your PAVF profile with your boss, and if this person is unaware of PAVF, give a brief outline of it, your strengths and your weaknesses and how you propose to deal with the weakness (not more training, but support for weaknesses) along with your focus towards strengths.

Step 5: Set up weekly meetings

Good management means that you need to meet weekly with your boss. In fact the whole team should meet once a week with your boss. However trying to set up a meeting for yourself will be quite enough of a challenge. Tell your boss that in order to do your job, you need to touch base once a week with your superior. It should be an hour-long meeting but if a half hour or 15 minutes is all you can get that is infinitely better than zero time. Once the idea of a meeting is grudgingly acknowledged (or positively acknowledged) suggest a regular time to do it "Friday noontime at 12:30". Send your boss an agenda for the meeting at least one full day before the meeting. Don't let trips or holidays create an excuse to avoid the meetings; set an alternative time for such circumstances; it could even be a telephone meeting.

Step 6: Set up your performance reviews

Set up quarterly performance reviews for yourself. See details in *The Respect Revolution* publication Volume II, Section 9.3d.

Step 7: Get your boss to follow up decisions

After each meeting with your boss, send a little memo saying: "Charlie, this is my understanding of our meeting yesterday." Then list each action item, who was to do it and by when. "It was agreed that I would investigate the Paris show costs and get back to you by next Tuesday, the 26th." Finally, add (i) a disclaimer and (ii) your own verification: (i) "If I have misunderstood anything, please let me know." (ii) "I will assume in the absence of anything to the contrary from you within the next few days, that I have captured the essence of our Monday meeting."

Step 8: Follow up your boss' action list

When one (or more) of the action items of your boss related to you is not done, send a polite prompt. Blame yourself. Offer assistance. "Charlie, my understanding is that you would provide me the client lists by Wednesday the 11th. Did I get my wires crossed? Is there something you would like me to do to assist in this endeavor?"

Step 9: Define your own outcomes

You need to know what you are supposed to deliver and by when. This avoids the boss fussing over the details of the 'how' you do it but rather concentrates on the 'what' or results of what you do. Please see the details in the other publications such as *The Respect Revolution*, Volume IX, Section 5.3.

Step 10: Deal with last-minute hi-jacking

If your boss drops a load on you at what seems to be an inappropriate moment, disrupts a meeting, asks you to stay late, etc., of course you must comply to deal with an emergency. However, if this hi-jacking of your priorities with the boss' agenda occurs frequently, there is an organizational or respect-related problem, which you must address. Obviously, you have to be extremely delicate in the manner in which

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you begin the training. "Three times this week, I have had to defer some of my work to address sudden issues from you. I am confused about my other priorities. Can you help me sort them out?" Sticking to the facts initially, you follow on to let your boss know that there has been a negative consequence to you of these last-minute intrusions. Then you get your superior involved in the solution, reinforcing the point of the stress they are adding to your life. That alone might be enough to have your boss think twice before dropping a bomb on you again. If not, round two might be, as you cope with this new emergency: "Is there something I

might do for you now so that you will not be caught by surprise by an event like this next week?" A boss, who does not accept such a helpful suggestion, will most likely take a second look at the organizational aspect of that job. Keep up the friendly, thoughtful pressure, using the most positive and pleasant language you can muster. Eventually things will sort themselves out.

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