



Dear June,

Don't You Have an All-Day Meeting Somewhere?

At the end of 2011, we asked **EA Insights** readers to give us some feedback on their biggest workplace challenges, and the strongest response we received was in the area of bosses. Hmm!

Thinking back over the years, I've had my share of bosses. Some excellent, some good, and some...well, you know. One came to mind immediately, though, as I reviewed the poll feedback.

This boss exhibited a pursuit for excellence...on steroids! It was so extreme that it was anal. (And, for those of you who know me well, for me to label something as "anal," it had to be over the top!)

So, this boss would delegate a task, supposedly anyway, and then proceed to tell you exactly when, where, and to the letter how it was to be done. I had this job in the days before email (thankfully), but we'd arrive most mornings to find lengthy (and I do mean lengthy) voicemail messages detailing everything that we needed to do, or changes we needed to make, for the day. And, by golly, this boss really needed a refund from the company, because every vacation day (when we thought we'd finally have some peace and be able to work uninterrupted) this boss was on the phone, being passed from person-to-person with reminders and rework. So, over time, we stopped wishing for vacation days and started hoping for all-day, off-site meetings; at least then we knew that there would be a few segments of the day that were undisturbed. Awful, weren't we?

Whether it's the extreme micromanager, described here, or bosses that drive you crazy in other ways, we hope this month's **EA Insights** will provide some help. (And, bosses, this one's for you too!) Read on, and let's explore together how to navigate in a work environment with some interesting supervisory models.

All the best,

June

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How to Get Something Done... Despite Your Boss!

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Unless you work for yourself, you've got a boss. Now, for some, that's comforting. However, for many, having to report to someone is, as the old folks would say, "more than a notion."

Have you ever considered what makes the subject of "bosses" one that causes eyes to roll and that prompts heavy sighs? One

reason might be that some folks just don't like being managed. Consequently, anyone in a position of authority over them by default becomes Public Enemy #1. (Ooh, did I really write that?) Probably the more common reason, though, is that these authority figures are people -- with their fair share of good points, as well as the flaws.

How do you co-exist with a boss who drives you crazy? Well, there's always encouraging your company to enlist Executive Advantage to

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"Quotes"

"Any excuse will serve a tyrant."

~Aesop

"The main thing is you just want to stay out of everybody's way, just don't want to interrupt anything. More than anything, you just want to observe."

~Marlon Anderson

"You can lessen the chance that your boss will make bad decisions that adversely affect you and your career by managing your relationship with the boss. Keep the boss informed about what's going on at work and never forget the pressure your boss is under. Honesty and reliability will win the hearts of most bosses."

~Jane Boucher

"Authority without wisdom is like a heavy ax without an edge, fitter to bruise than polish."

~Anne Bradstreet

"It is enjoyable to make things visible which are invisible."

~Eric Cantona

"My next boss will be normal."

~Jamie Dimon

"I was so

provide professional development to the management team (or, at least, for your manager). Okay, so, if that recommendation is above your pay grade, is there anything that *is* more within your control and that might enable you to get something done...despite your boss? The answer is "yes," and it stems from understanding. Let's take a look at six personality types and a few recommendations for working with them.

The Micromanager

I've worked with a lot of leaders over the years. And, there are some common threads among micromanagers. They tend to be extremely conscientious people, people who strive for excellence and have great attention to detail. Ah, and therein lies the challenge. They're managers! Not only are they in a role which requires them to get a job done *through* others, but they also live in a world where not everyone shares their level of care. (Talk about a formula for sleepless nights!) So, in an attempt to try to get things done...the right way (from their perspectives, anyway), they check everything, and look over your shoulder constantly, and often go overboard.

How do you cope? The key is helping your supervisor to gain a level of comfort with your work. (Implied here is that you actually are working...and doing so diligently.) And so, besides earnest effort, a large part of reaching that comfort level rests with communication. Explain that you understand your supervisor's commitment to excellence and want to perform that way consistently yourself. Talk through the scope of, and expectations for, new assignments. Find out if there are any requirements regarding the task or whether you have leeway (within reason) in any areas, and then follow the instructions you've been given. Provide ongoing progress reports as the work continues, and regularly seek your supervisor's input. This type of approach demonstrates your dedication to producing a solid product, shows that you value his expertise, and alleviates the need for your manager to impose on you because you already are actively sharing with him as you complete your work.



The Tyrant

Tyrants are loud, overbearing, condescending, and sometimes abusive. And, they're no fun to work for. However, when you scratch below the surface, you often see that tyrant behavior is learned behavior. A tyrant usually had a role model -- not a positive one, mind you, but one who got results. So, a tyrant perpetuates the use of the rough, gruff exterior to *coerce* people into producing rather than relating to people in a way that results in them *wanting* to produce.



If you ever observe a tyrant, you'll notice that there's at least one close person with whom that tyrant behavior doesn't work. What's the secret? Usually that person has been able to pierce the facade. It's not done disrespectfully, but it's done. Perhaps it's calmly sharing with the yeller that your hearing is perfectly fine.

Perhaps it's getting the person to laugh with you in the middle of a rant. Again, though, you've got to be doing your job solidly first; however, if you are, then the key is disarming the person so that you can engage him in a motivation tactic that's more effective for you than the "in your face" approach.

The Praise Hog

Sitcoms are full of them, but so are all too many actual workplaces. Praise hogs are the managers who do little or nothing, but take all the glory. The bottom line is that a praise hog is insecure. She doesn't realize that honesty is important (and that dishonesty can backfire on you). Nor does she understand that, by properly crediting the members of her team, she ultimately garners greater respect - certainly from the team, but also from her superiors, who credit her for cultivating and recognizing emerging talent.

When faced with a praise hog, do your best to defuse the competition. Now, that doesn't mean losing your ambition, but it does mean channeling it productively. Ensure that your boss knows that you're a solid member of the team and that you're not after her job...that is, until she's ready to pass the torch to you. When praise comes your way, share it; recognize the role that others played in the accomplishment, especially your boss. If you are generous with acknowledgments, she'll be less apt to grab them for herself.



The Time Stealer

If you long for the days when your boss is out of the office because you get so much more done, you've got a time stealer on your hands. A time stealer is the supervisor who moseys into your work area with a quick question...and stays for an hour, or one who sends you 50 emails a day...each one requesting an immediate answer. This type of person can absolutely blow your schedule.

micromanaged that they were telling me how to pronounce syllables of words."

~Bob Edwards

"Other people's interruptions of your work are relatively insignificant compared with the countless times you interrupt yourself."

~Brendan Francis

"We should place confidence in our employee.

Confidence is the foundation of friendship. If we give it, we will receive it.

Any person in a managerial position, from supervisor to president, who feels that his employee is not as good as he is and who suspects his employee of trying to put something over on him, lacks the qualities for human leadership, to say nothing of human friendship."

~Harry E. Humphreys, Jr.

"There are times when even the best manager is like the little boy with the big dog, waiting to see where the dog wants to go so he can take him there."

~Lee Iacocca

"I'm the kind of manager that doesn't believe that you micromanage professionals. They should understand their responsibility and carry out those responsibilities."

~Alphonso Jackson

"Individual accolades come when your team is successful."

~LeBron James

"Self-praise is for losers. Be a winner. Stand for something. Always have class, and be humble."

~John Madden

"He's very straight forward, very laid back. He's not going to yell and scream at you. And at this level, most of [us] don't respond well to an overbearing coach.

He has a lot of information, a good eye. He's not going to upset you. He's just going to give you the plain truth. And

For this one, I offer one reactive suggestion and one proactive suggestion. First is reactive. You might estimate the amount of time you devote to your supervisor on an average day. Then, build that amount of time into your schedule. You may find that you're less frustrated with those interruptions because you already have them accounted for in your day. On the other hand, this approach doesn't help you in changing behavior, just in planning for it.

So, if you are willing to take the step and address the behavior with your boss, you're ready for the proactive option. When the interruption comes, if you're in the middle of a bona fide work task (no surfing the Internet or talking with a friend), be honest. Tactfully explain what you were doing, and then ask whether your current task is something that you should pause (for the interruption) or whether he prefers that you finish off what you're doing and touch base in 10 minutes, a half hour, after lunch, tomorrow morning, whatever's appropriate, for the new matter. This approach diplomatically conveys that you are serious about each task your supervisor assigns, but that you can handle only one matter at a time. However, it also gives your boss, who may have a different understanding of current priorities, the chance to make a shift in your work, as the need dictates.

The Invisible One

Okay, trust me, this one really is a problem. Sometimes, folks can't get their work done because the manager can't be found. For example, have you ever needed authorization to take the next step, but the person with the authority has disappeared?



Working with an invisible manager can be a challenge. One approach is to reach out to your manager and inquire about the best way to communicate with him, especially regarding time-sensitive matters. Also, try to think ahead. If you have regularly-scheduled meetings with your supervisor, between meetings keep a running list of questions, needs, etc. Then, use those sessions to go through your list and tackle the bulk of your list in one setting.

The Non-Manager

The non-manager isn't invisible, but she's not exhibiting effective leadership skills. This is the person who allows conflict to fester, who doesn't set clear expectations, who is scurrying around working on technical issues and not addressing managerial tasks. In other words, you've got a person in the supervisor's seat, but little supervising is happening.



Sometimes the non-manager is a super-worker, who's gotten a promotion but whose heart is really not in the people, or decision-making, or administrative aspects of the role. Other times the non-manager has been placed in the role as a result of an emergency, nepotism, or politics, even though she lacks a good grasp of what's required on either the technical or on the managerial side of the role.

To accomplish something when you have a non-manager, you'll have to take on more responsibility. Be committed to initiating frequent communication, and seek out opportunities to describe each situation in which you need support -- in other words, clearly outline the opportunity or the challenge being presented, its impact on the team, your needs, time-sensitivity, etc. Support your supervisor in her challenge areas, such as organization, timeliness, team-engagement, or problem-solving, so that you become a benefit rather than a detriment to her work. And, maybe, you'll see your non-manager evolve into the boss you want and need.

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that is what we all need."

~Adam Nelson

"I certainly don't have all the answers. But I do know one thing. In many instances, insecure leadership does not surround themselves with the best people available because they're kind of concerned they're hiring their successor. My philosophy is, if you win, there's so much glory out there for everybody that you really don't need to take it all."

~Steve Stone

"Micromanaging is ridiculous. There's always a certain amount of dynamic tension, which is good because it stimulates creative thinking. But what we want to look for...is a balance where each body or group of people is fulfilling their role."

~Karin Uhlich

"An honest man is hurt by praise unjustly bestowed."

~Unknown

"Firing these bosses may be a drastic action; instead workers need to provide their bosses with feedback about what will make them better leaders. Poor people skills may not cost the boss their job, but it is costing them the confidence of their teams."

~Rich Wellins

About Executive Advantage

At **Executive Advantage**, we are committed to providing results-based business and management consulting, leadership development, and coaching support. We partner with business leaders to build healthy, well-functioning organizations, where goals are met and people thrive. We also partner with individuals to create professional (and personal) lives with clearer direction, improved results, and greater balance.

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