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## Quotes

*"The worst mistake a boss can make is not to say 'well done'."*  
~John Ashcroft

*"In the past a leader was a boss. Today's leaders must be partners with their people... they no longer can lead solely based on positional power."*  
~Ken Blanchard

*"More than half of people who leave their jobs do so because of their relationship with their boss. Smart companies make certain their managers know how to balance being professional with being human. These are the bosses who celebrate an employee's success, empathize with those going through hard times, and challenge people, even when it hurts."*  
~Travis Bradberry

*"A lot of people ask what it takes to move from being a creative to a leader: Take everyone's career personally. People will work hard for you if you work hard for them. Any idiot can be a boss; all you need is a title. But to be a leader, you need to earn respect and have an opinion you stand by."*  
~David Droga

*"What made me this way was watching my father go through bad employment experiences. When I was 17, and he was 65, I saw him go through the experiences working for a boss that was rude and obnoxious. I swore if I was ever had the capacity to run a company that I would do it in a different way."*  
~Tom Golisano

*"Being a boss has been one of the greatest privileges and challenges of my life."*  
~Rachel Hollis

# BOSS

## A "Boss" to Brag About

Have you noticed how many new "holidays" have been added to the calendar? Don't ask me who's created them all; they just seem to appear...a few more each year.

Recently, as I turned on the radio and sat down to work, lo and behold, there is another one! This time it was National Bosses Day! Never heard of it? Neither had I.

However, on the radio, caller after caller waited in line to extol the virtues of his or her boss. It was heartening. And, I even got a serious belly laugh from the lady who asked her boss, if he were listening, to forgive her for being late for work, but she was on her phone in the parking lot (where she gets the best cell reception) waiting to tell the world how wonderful he is. You've gotta love it! Think about it, though. What makes a boss one who's worth bragging about? I'm glad you asked.

That's exactly what we'll cover in this edition of **EA Insights**. So, keep reading. Perhaps next year you'll have folks sitting in the parking lot, or be the one ready to share, an on-air high-five!

All the best,

June

June Melvin Mickens  
Executive Advantage, LLC

## Best Boss Honors

**June Melvin Mickens**  
**Executive Advantage, LLC**



As I write this piece, some in the U.S. are celebrating National Bosses Day. (*No, I don't know who makes up these new holidays, but go with me for a few minutes.*) On the radio this morning, person after person called in to share a shout out about the boss who makes life special. Some kudos were encouraging. Some were comical. And, some were just...interesting.

It all got me thinking, though. What really qualifies someone for best-boss honors? I settle on five essential best-boss-honors components -- call them BBHCs. Let's take a quick look at each.

### BBHC #1: Be decent.

It goes without saying that people don't want to work with someone who's not pleasant to be around. Yes, we all have our favorite Oscar-the-Grouch curmudgeon. You know, the person who's gruff on the outside but lovable at heart. However, it is emotionally and physically taxing for staff to have to brace themselves for moods each day, or to know that a tongue-lashing inevitably will occur before punch-out time, or to function in an environment clothed in disrespect.

No, little Mary Sunshine is not the expectation; decency is. To put yourself in the running for best-boss honors, a first step is remembering that you are leading *people*. It's your responsibility to create a work setting in which your people can produce -- with creativity and enthusiasm and attention to detail and excellence. And, honestly, that healthy productivity objective is hampered, far too frequently, by a leader who fails to understand that, as a thermostat, it's your job to *set* the temperature rather than be a thermometer that simply reads it.

So, be decent. Manage yourself first so that you're in the best position possible to lead others.

## **BBHC #2: Continually frame, for your staff, what's expected of them.**

I've been consulting lately with an organization in which I held a senior leadership role years ago. One day a lady invited me to her workspace and showed me something that I'd given each of the 120 or so staff members that fell under my leadership umbrella more than a decade earlier. It was a mounted puzzle piece. My message to each of them was that every person is an important piece of the puzzle; our picture would be incomplete unless everyone did his or her part. Trust me, I was teary-eyed that she still had her piece of the puzzle and that it still mattered.

The take-away is that, as the person at the helm, you cannot assume that your team members all understand the direction in which you're going and how the daily things they do, or don't do, impact your group's ability to reach the goals. It's up to you, leader, to paint the picture and frame it for them continually. It's not enough to give the pitch at the interview or on employment Day 1 or in an annual state-of-affairs speech or even in a monthly staff meeting. Look for ways regularly, in informal coaching or interaction, when a new event occurs, or on countless other occasions to draw and then connect the dots for folks. It's up to you to share so that they are better able to grasp for themselves how critical each and every role is to the work you do. After all, if it were not, you probably wouldn't have that position on the roll.

## **BBHC #3: Advocate for, and secure (to the extent possible), the resources the team needs to succeed.**

Best bosses do their all to equip their teams for success. Yes, some decisions are made above your pay grade. Yes, some years, like 2020, present tighter budgets than others and make "doing things on a shoestring" the mantra by which everyone must live. But, overall, a key part of effectively leading a team is not just giving orders, it's working to understand the resources it will take to carry out those orders and then doing your best to ensure that people will have what they need to get the job done. There is nothing more frustrating than being given a job to do but then having one hand tied behind your back as you attempt to perform.

## **BBHC #4: Support each person to carry out the assigned functions.**

Team support also is high on the list of BBHCs. Support begins by getting to know the members of your team, their work styles, their strengths and challenges, and sometimes even what's happening with them in nonwork hours so that you're able to understand the person.

The best bosses are able to guide effectively because they have become familiar with those whom they are charged with leading. By *knowing*, you're able to coach well, to recognize signs of confusion or stress, to see when additional hands are needed, or to give a pat on the back for someone who may be feeling unseen. This type of support helps the members of the team do the work that has been assigned to them...and to do it well.

## **BBHC #5: Play a meaningful part in helping each person grow and achieve individual goals.**

Every member of your team has individual dreams -- even if it involves impending retirement. People in the running for best-boss honors certainly know that they are responsible to meet organizational goals but, that they will be better positioned to do so if they help team members, where possible, to realize and achieve some of their own career or life goals as well.

When people truly feel as if they are more to you than pawns on a chessboard, that you care about what they care about, they will work hard for and with you. Interestingly, even staff members whose goals take them away from such a leader's unit or organization likely will have fond memories and become champions for you and your company, and will tout your brand, because you took the time to invest in them. So, I know the workload may be heavy, but best-boss honors go to those who invest at least a little time each day or week to support the growth and advancement of others in some way.

Want to be on next year's best-boss honors list? We all do. However, there are times when you too could use support. After all, it's simple, but not necessarily easy, to show decency, to frame direction and expectations, to supply resources, to support job success, or to invest in team members individually. So, if you could use a partner on your walk as a leader, call on us at **Executive Advantage**. Let us come along side and help to strengthen *you* so that you're able to nurture a team that appreciates you AND that produces with excellence. [Contact us today](#).

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*"No one wants to follow a pessimist... You can be skeptical, you can be realistic, but you can't be cynical. If your boss is Eeyore, do you want to work with someone like that? Oh, bother."*  
~Bob Iger

*"[I]f you're the boss, just because they don't ask doesn't mean your employees don't have needs."*  
~James Levine

*"[Staff] look up to the boss for behavioral cues, subtle signs, hints and gestures."*  
~Grace Poe

*"At one point, you were that employee who looked like a deer in headlights. Confused, lost, and not understanding your purpose within the organization. Even though you have the appropriate skills, you felt like you were in over your head. That is, until an amazing boss empowered you."*  
~John Rampton

*"My idea of management is that what your job is as the boss is to find really good people and empower them and leave them alone."*  
~Ruth Reichl

*"Make sure you are clear about the expectations your boss has for you."*  
~Judy Smith

*"If I'm your boss, and I truly want you to be successful... I'm inherently going to teach you. I'm inherently going to correct your mistakes. I'm inherently going to spend time with you. I'm inherently going to lead you."*  
~Jon Taffer

*"Every boss I've ever had has challenged me, pushed me, believed in me, and led by example."*  
~Elaine Welteroth

*"A good boss makes his men realize they have more ability than they think they have so that they consistently do better work than they thought they could."*  
~Charles Erwin Wilson

## **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.

To learn more about **Executive Advantage**, contact us [online](#) or at (301) 280-5950.

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