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Here's what makes a good boss

In honor of National Bosses Day, we praise people who are superior at being superiors

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October 15, 2010

In honor of National Bosses Day, here's a primer on what makes a good boss.

The good boss doesn't strut as if he were your superior in the game of life. He understands that all power is fleeting and borrowed, a fancy suit on loan.

The good boss has a boss too, and he tries to please her, but he doesn't forget that his real power comes not from the realms above him but from the rank-and-file.

The good boss listens. He listens well enough that he sees the problem before it turns into a crisis. But if it turns into a crisis, the good boss doesn't hide.

Even the good boss thinks he's busier than you are, but he understands that your time is important too.

He answers your e-mails, though rarely as fast as you answer his.

The good boss knows what you want above all: respect. Not that a raise would hurt.

The good boss does not work on his BlackBerry while talking to you. He does not badmouth colleagues in your presence, even if you wish he would. He tries to make everyone feel special and included.

The good boss is self-aware. He knows that every memo he sends out is scrutinized like CIA code: What does it really mean when he says "Good job"?

The good boss knows that it is the sad lot of all bosses to be resented by someone, but he genuinely tries to understand how his behavior affects others.

The good boss doesn't say "Don't take it personally" when delivering bad news. He knows that

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work is personal.

The good boss has the courage to deal with bad employees.

The good boss tells you when you've screwed up and he forgives you — in the same conversation. He does not take credit for your ideas, nor does a good boss demand credit when he gives you an idea.

Still, it never hurts to thank him. So I'll note that I got the previous two tips from my boss.

The good boss is not afraid of people as smart as he is. He lets them help him look good.

The good boss does not tell you everything he knows, but he does not lie. And he doesn't confuse dissent with disloyalty.

The good boss sees what you do best and matches your job to your talents. He gives you room to bloom.

The good boss remembers how he felt about bosses before he was one. He makes an effort to understand what you do and how you feel, so you forgive him if he never quite gets it.

A good boss reveals just enough about his personal life to remind you that bosses are people too. This never involves sex.

The good boss is not sexist, racist or the biggest clown at parties. Having said that, I have to say that the most brilliant boss I ever had had a couple of those failings.

The good boss doesn't take bonuses when the workers can't get a raise. He doesn't cling to a bad idea just because it was his.

A good boss realizes he can't be too friendly with people who call him boss, but he knows when to be generous and kind, and when to accept those offerings.

A good boss knows how to apologize and how to laugh, sometimes at himself.

And a good boss understands how much we all yearn for a good boss.

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