



# LEADERS VS. BOSSES

Attributes of effective leadership

BY BOB MCINTYRE

Business leadership styles typically fall into two categories: leaders and bosses. Leaders generate a vision and a roadmap for their employees that support the company's goals, while bosses generally consider themselves supervisors or people managers. Most human resources professionals agree that employees are more likely to gravitate toward and be inspired by leaders who focus on the big picture and allow their staff to identify and execute the best strategies for fulfilling that vision.

So how do managers determine whether or not they are simply a boss or a true leader? And what can they do to make the transition? Here are a few insights and tips.

Leaders trust their employees.

Bosses tinker or micromanage.

Company leaders provide employees with the right tools to get the job done and trust them to deliver. They provide regular updates on projects and send out alerts to address problems as they arise. This leadership style allows team members to flourish and grow. In comparison, bosses are often considered micromanagers. They regularly delve deeply into their employees' workloads or perform work themselves that should have been delegated to others. This form of management can lead to distrust and cripple worker motivation.

Leaders give their teams credit.

Bosses take the credit themselves.

Bosses often fail to identify the efforts of their teams or individual employees when a project is successfully completed. However, when there are issues or blunders, others are to blame. True leaders recognize that while they are ultimately responsible for successes and failures, most projects are a team effort and the individuals behind a major accomplishment deserve recognition. In addition to earning trust and respect, highlighting the success of others will help managers in their efforts to retain top talent.

Leaders listen to understand.

Bosses listen to reply.

Genuine leaders are always ready to receive information from their employees. They provide a sense of security by setting other tasks aside and making time to communicate with team members—preferably in-person. Bosses look for gaps in discussions to interject their own opinions, sometimes without listening or absorbing the thoughts of the other team members. Bosses also often fail to see the value of face-to-face communications and send an email when a more meaningful form of communication would likely be a better approach.

Leaders create a constructive learning environment.

Bosses are reactive when providing feedback.

Leaders offer constructive advice to team members when mistakes are made. They also help employees build problem-solving skills to aid them later in their careers. Leaders offer this input in a private setting to help prevent employee embarrassment and frustration, which can impede learning. Bosses tend to worry less about feelings and react hastily to staff members when mistakes are made.

Leaders are highly engaged and cultivate enthusiasm.

Bosses can be aloof.

Bosses who are easily distracted or appear aloof are often unable to inspire their teams. As a result, employee morale can decline. In comparison, leaders who are engaged understand the importance of positive reinforcement and regular communication. They recognize how motivation drives positivity, and they seek to establish and maintain that kind of environment.

Leaders never stop learning.

Bosses become content.

Leaders understand it is never too late to learn something new and there is always a lesson to be learned in every situation. A good leader will not attempt to halt an employee's personal growth or withhold information unless absolutely necessary. Bosses often feel they have reached a level of success and expertise and are therefore less open to new ideas or learning opportunities. 🌱



*Bob McIntyre is a director of service operations for Insperity, a trusted advisor to America's best businesses for more than 31 years. The company provides an array of human resources and business solutions designed to help improve business performance.*