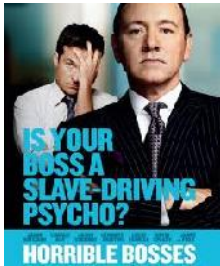


7 tips that will stop you being a 'horrible boss'



“Horrible Bosses” is a new movie with a familiar theme – employees plotting against abusive bosses. This one has extreme behaviour on both sides – from sexual harassment and job theft by the boss, to “problem-solving” via hit man by the employees.

Fortunately, few people resort to violence to deal with a challenging boss, but that doesn’t mean bad behaviour won’t cost you. Not only does employee morale suffer at the hands of a “horrible boss,” but so do productivity and engagement. In short, a horrible boss is a bottom-line issue.

The good news is that, with greater awareness and some training, most leaders can learn how to effectively communicate, motivate and engage their employees.

Here are seven quick tips to avoid being a “horrible boss” by giving employees what they need:

- 1. Talk straight and save the spin** – Employees want to know what’s happening, and why, in a direct way. Don’t beat around the bush or try to “spin” messages to employees. Tell them what you know as soon as you know it. Chances are you’re waiting too long after getting key information to communicate it.
- 2. Spell out your expectations** – People rise to the expectations set for them. Many problems in business are caused by employees not understanding what their employers need and what their supervisors expect of them.
- 3. Listen and invite feedback** – Employees are more likely to support what they help to create, and you can leverage their talent better when you know more about them. Instead of you providing a monologue directed at them, ask for employee input and feedback. You’re likely to learn something important when you make a point of focusing on real, two-way conversations.
- 4. Take action on employee suggestions** – If you can implement their suggestions, great, but even if that is not an option you can acknowledge the idea and their effort to share it. The action might be to loop back with the employee, say you appreciate their thoughts, and help them understand how you’re addressing the issue. Closing the feedback loop is action, and that can be as impactful as implementing the actual suggestion.
- 5. Show you care (in a genuine way)** – Leaders can build trust and relationships when they find out what’s important to employees and acknowledge critical milestones, whether it is their company anniversary date, birthdays or personal accomplishments.
- 6. Empathise with your team** – Make an effort to understand how your employees are feeling. Listen carefully to what they have to say, reflect back to them what you’ve heard, and validate their feelings. The payoff is an employee who knows you care and the chance to gather information that’s useful to motivate that employee.

7. Recognise effort and show appreciation – Say “thank you” for a job well done. Reinforce very specifically the behaviours you want to continue to see. Everyone benefits when you reward and recognise someone on your team, even if it’s for “just doing their job.” Jobs don’t inspire and motivate people; leaders do.

Bad behaviour can cost you employee support, morale, and productivity. But it doesn’t cost anything to follow these steps to communicate in ways that motivate and engage employees. The payoff can be huge.

What are you doing as a leader to motivate and engage your employees?

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