

There's More to Being a Good Boss than Being Smart



Image Source - "Altered States," Warner Brothers

“The final truth of all things is that there is no final Truth. Truth is what's transitory. It's human life that is real.” – Eddie Jessup, “Altered States,” Warner Brothers, 1980

The time has come you've been working for; you're ready to move up or out and become a boss.

You're ready because you're perfect – strong, fearless and flawless – with just the right mix of superhero, royalty, savior.

If you are all of these things, congratulations.

Just know that you're all alone.

The rest – even the really good people who have risen to the top of their organization – are only human.

The fact is no one is perfect and understanding that as you plan your move to the top will be a big step forward.

Now the big question is if you're ready, really ready.

Sure, it will make your mom proud, your significant other happy ... and probably more than a few in the organization resentful.

You have to recognize that and handle it with modesty and tact because most of the time getting to the top is the result of opportunity – being in the right place at the right time – and luck.

It would be great if there were one or two bosses you could emulate, but they're as different as you and me.

Whether you succeed or fail often depends less on your experience – engineering, finance, marketing, sales, manufacturing – and more on how you relate with, treat others – team members, suppliers, customers.

It's the little things along the way that mark you as a leader and you have to work at getting better at them every day.

Lone Decisions

Even when you have the best people in the industry, leaders are alone in making the tough decisions that impact the organization and the people who work for the company.



Source - [ideachampions](#)

***Forks in the Road** – Bosses at every level have to make decisions--often very important decisions--that affect individuals, products, partners, customers. The good boss considers all of them and then makes the best decision for all concerned.*

Putting the decision off--or even worse, having the decision made by a committee, only compounds the problem.

The measure of a good leader lies in being able to make decisions while considering the impact it will have on others.

Weak managers tend to hire and have people around them who don't threaten them so they can feel superior.

Strong managers build strong teams with people who are smarter than themselves, giving them the freedom and authority to make decisions that keep the company moving and focusing on the organization's long-range goals/objectives.

Good managers have a strong enough egos and the self-confidence required to oversee teams of really smart, experienced, dedicated people.

Time will tell if Meg Whitman's decisions for HP were right or wrong but she considered the total health of the company as well as the impact on individuals (and partner firms) when she set the direction for the company, supported her teams and focused on making the company strong after what many feel were a string of poor CEO decisions.

It's easy for people to Monday-morning-quarterback decisions on choosing one direction or another, but making no decision can have even worse consequences.

Getting Things Done

Weak and strong managers both get things done.

The difference is weak managers resort to creating fear and anxiety by making demands that if questioned, produce a rigid response.



Source - [Koenigshot](#)

Jump – Demand orders can get the job done but telling people to jump and how high is less effective than encouraging them, helping them make the right decisions and then supporting them.

It is often difficult and uncomfortable to call the shots; but it is necessary, especially if you're a new manager who's exercising authority over people who are more experienced in the company and their specific area.

You have to be balanced and fairly comfortable in making decisions and getting the organization moving without being overly hesitant or overly aggressive.

At Cisco Partner Summit, John Chambers (former CEO) clearly outlined the vision, direction, future and opportunities for the company and its partners.

In his interviews, he reassured partners that they were important to the company's success, outlined the strength/expertise the employees had to achieve the firm's goals and rallied both groups by throwing down the gauntlet by stating emphatically that, "*if you compete against us you will lose.*"

You might view the bold statement as hubris but it rallied employees, partners and probably a lot of customers.

He laid out the company's expectations and commitment in an open, straightforward, positive manner.

Gentler Side

All kinds of things happen in our lives – the dog spots the carpet, kids revolt (O.K., they're revolting), people drive in comas ... bad stuff just happens.

But strong leaders find ways to leave the issues at the door when they come to the office and are able to connect with others and treat them with respect.

Being approachable, saying thank you and being kind can be some of the best defenses you'll have in disarming situations and winning loyalty, support, commitment.



Source - US Lacrosse

Fine Line – *The boss is first and foremost a coach, strategist and cheerleader for the organization. He guides his team but also has to be approachable and able to listen to other ideas, suggestions.*

Treating others poorly just because you're experiencing or experienced poor treatment accomplishes nothing.

People who are approachable and make others feel comfortable in their presence isn't a sign of weakness, it's a sign of strength, confidence.

Lots of people disagree with Tim Cook's approach to management because he didn't fit his boss' mold and the mystic that is Apple; but that was then, this is now.

There's still a walled garden of secrecy at Apple but Cook has also added a human face to Apple by visiting suppliers, customers, the media.

He has been more open in saying, *"I'm sorry, we made a mistake"* (much to the chagrin of many people) but he has done it in a manner that looks, feels sincere and very credible.

It's surprising how simple statements like *thank you, you're right* and *I'm sorry* can be strong motivators for people – staff and customers.

As Eddie Jessup noted, *"Memory is energy! It doesn't disappear - it's still in there."*

Recognizing that someone did a good job – what you expected from them – and saying you appreciate their contribution (customer or employee) is also an indirect way of saying keep doing good work, buying more of our stuff.

When it's Wrong

There's been a lot written about having fun in business; but for the most part, that's wrong ... business is stressful.

The best leaders stay calm when it seems the wheels are falling off the cart.



Source - [jrcompton](#)

***Discontent or Disaster** – The boss isn't always going to make the decisions you agree with but a good boss will listen/consider alternatives. If you still think he's wrong, then it's time to leave without making a scene internally or externally. If the vultures are gathering, you proved your point.*

Others scream, holler, throw tantrums, demand, go ballistic and compound/cloud the problems, the issues.

Whether you're a senior executive or department group head, you set the tone for the rest of the organization.

If you don't hold the reigns and feel the direction or focus is wrong, you have two choices – professionally (hopefully calmly) discuss the situation with your boss and explore alternatives or ... bail.

Keith Block, former head of sales at Oracle and now president at Salesforce, is only the most recent management level individual who asserted his company had made/was making unwise decisions.

There are hundreds, maybe thousands, who have internally and publicly disagreed with management decisions, actions, directions.

Undermining management by complaining to team members is counter-productive.

It's not wrong to disagree with your boss -- although there are those who don't accept anything less than blind obedience--but those discussions should be conducted privately.

If the decision/direction is in your opinion illegal or immoral, then you have a professional/ethical responsibility to yourself to divorce yourself as quickly as possible.

If you simply think they're heading down the wrong path, find an organization/management team you can support.

Grousing to anyone who will listen only hurts you.

Listen, Learn

In our fast-paced, hectic business one of the toughest (and most powerful) things you can do is listen.



Source - [parentingforpotential](#)

***Open Your Ears** – You learn from everyone around you as long as you keep an open mind and weigh the information based on your experience and the direction of the company. Close your ears to ideas, suggestions, recommendations and soon people feel they aren't part of a team and act accordingly.*

There's perhaps nothing more demeaning to someone than when they are presenting information or simply talking with another person and they are checking their smartphone, reading email or their mind is obviously somewhere else.

Yet, listening is the best way (and cheapest) possible to gain information, discover a new idea.

No one is really a born leader.

They earn that expertise by listening and being coachable.

The person who is open to be taught, coached and shown understands that there are hundreds of mistakes he/she can make in business but it is so much easier – and less painful – when you learn from others' mistakes.

The best bosses/leaders know how to be good followers ... good listeners ... good learners.

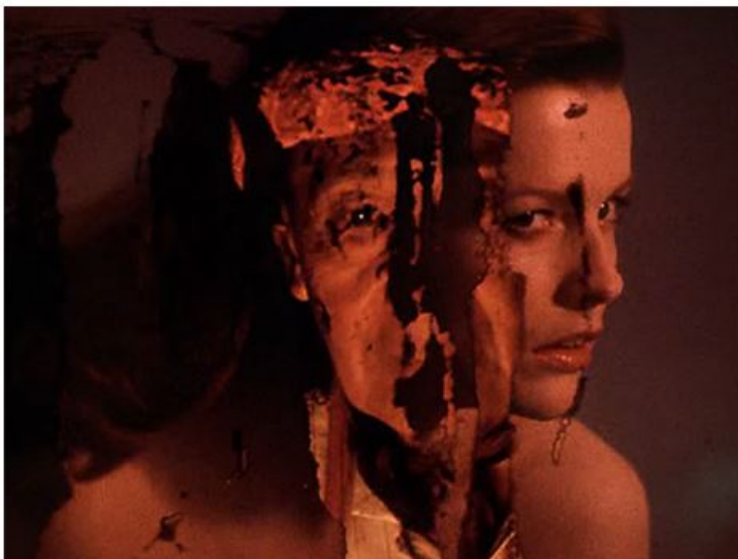


Image Source – "Altered States," Warner Brothers

If you're up to the task, you'll wonder what Eddie meant when he said, "*The purpose of our suffering is only more suffering.*"

###