

# Productive to the Max

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## ***Dealing with the BOSS***

### **MaxTips! November 2009**

A sales rep, an administration clerk and the manager are walking to lunch when they find an antique oil lamp. They rub it and a Genie comes out. The Genie says, "I'll give each of you just one wish." "Me first! Me first!" says the admin. clerk. "I want to be in the Bahamas, driving a speedboat, without a care in the world." Poof! She's gone. "Me next! Me next!" says the sales rep. "I want to be in Hawaii, relaxing on the beach with my personal masseuse, an endless supply of Pina Coladas and the love of my life." Poof! He's gone. "OK, you're up," the Genie says to the manager. The manager says, "I want those two back in the office after lunch."

***Moral of the story: - Always let your boss have the first say.***

## **Questionnaire**

1. Do you know your boss's leadership style? Bureaucratic, consultative, charismatic, dictatorial, laissez-faire?
2. Do you understand what makes your boss tick? Values, goals, objectives, unique needs, interests?
3. Are you aware of the major decisions your boss has made this year?
4. Do you know the stressors, pet peeves, annoyances that affect your boss?
5. Do you know what is admired, respected, or makes your boss proud?
6. Do you know how much support you can expect and receive?
7. What two things are truly important to your boss that you do?
8. Are you aware of the type of communication style that is exhibited?
9. Does your boss know the same things about you?
10. Are you all on the same wavelength?

No matter what type of boss you have, it is important that you both commit to shared goals and objectives. This is essential to maintain the bottom-line results for the organization. Establish a foundation of trust and support by being proactive in your dealings. Create a

relationship that matches your styles and needs. Do not wait for a crisis to prompt you into action. Clearly understand yourself, how your work and how this aligns with your manager's objectives and needs.

## How to deal with your Boss

**Communicate properly.** I have always said that communication is the key to everything you do in life. Dealing with your boss is no exception. You need to set up formal and informal encounters. If you work in an administrative or assistant capacity set up regular meetings in both your calendars to meet and compare notes at the beginning and the end of each day. For other reporting functions, ensure that you meet on a regular basis for advice, planning and preparation. Identify the communication style to see if either of you have trouble with discussions about workload or opinions and seek out options. Review your relationship on a regular basis and sometimes do this in another locale; outside of the office or in a boardroom.

**Define and clarify the roles.** Identify your areas of responsibility and accountability to avoid conflict and friction. Identify decisions that you can make on your own.

**Offer support aligned with objectives and values and respect their opinion.** Identify the weaknesses and offer subtle support to make yourself indispensable.

**Deliver your work on time,** with no errors and with the highest professional standards. Take ownership of all problems and offer and seek out solutions.

**Support the organization.** Work as a partner with your manager to achieve success beyond your work group.

**Speak with other staff members,** and ask for their advice and feedback.

**Align your styles and needs.**

## Working for Multiple Bosses

- Let them determine and prioritize your responsibilities.
- Prioritize people based on position and tasks
- Get assistance from your direct manager.
- Make sure to get a deadline for each task you are asked to handle.
- Be honest about your workload and what is urgent. Ask them what you should do with their specific task compared to all the other 'urgencies'.
- If it is going to cost the company in reputation or money, then prioritize the task. If it is beneficial to the company, then do it first. Look at the ramifications of your deadlines.
- Determine if there are processes to make your work easier and faster.
- Get help from others.
- Ask for overtime to complete the task.
- Keep a log of your workload, deadlines and from whom, to avoid any unpleasant contingencies.

## Do NOT

- Report unnecessary issues with long drawn out discussions.
- Underestimate yourself or your point of view. Create your own action plans and review them regularly.
- Take on work you can't manage.
- Gossip.
- Be aggressive.
- Criticize.
- Cross the line.
- Let emotion take control.
- Go over the bosses head without first tackling issues directly.

## DO

- Work as a team and develop joint objectives and partnerships.
- Offer relevant information in small bites. Deal with the facts.
- Celebrate your successes.
- Be presentable at all times.
- Act positive.
- Seize opportunities.
- Forgive yourself and your boss when you make mistakes.
- Learn to handle conflict immediately in a positive manner. Disagree constructively by offering alternatives.

## IS YOUR BOSS AN IDIOT?

Perhaps your boss is a jerk; a bully, sexually harassing or interested only in personal gain. Don't be intimidated and avoid appearing weak or submissive. Stay neutral. Make sure that you document everything you do by keeping records and collecting evidence. Always have a plan B if you decide to confront the person. If all else fails, go over their head.

Or you can follow the advice from Kathleen Lundin, coauthor of ***When Smart People Work for Dumb Bosses: How to Survive in a Crazy, Dysfunctional Workplace***. "Get over it or get out."

The problem in most cases, she says, is that your boss isn't going anywhere. Those who are in charge either had enough acumen to get themselves to the spot above you, they have the benefit of a protector, or they own the place. "The boss is there and he or she is not going to change," Lundin said. "It's you who has to change." The risk in staying is that you become part of the problem. By fitting in you may adopt some of your boss's craziness just to get things done and to get along. "It's unconscious. You just do it," Lundin said. And then if you still have enough energy left for reflection, you may find you've lost all self-respect. "You then have to get in a mode of remaking yourself," she said. So better to dodge a dope

by leaving. That's easier said than done in a tough job market, but at the very least you might position yourself to change departments within the company. "Standing still has no advantages if you're in a bad situation," Lundin said. "You've just got to get out."

Bosses are here to stay. Whether they write emails during your annual review, answer the phone during a client meeting or whack you on the arm to get your attention, it is up to you to either create the relationship you want or move on. Remember, whatever you learn from your boss you can always take with you and use (or NOT) when you achieve that enviable position.