

18 Executives Share Their Secrets to Being a Great Boss

By [Emma Hart](#)



You've probably heard people say, "people don't quit their job, they quit their bosses" and they're not wrong. Poorly managed and executed leadership can make all the difference between an

employee looking forward to going to work, or viewing their workplace as an undesirable place of doom. Poor management can have a really damaging effect on employee morale, motivation, and performance and can subsequently create an environment full of unhappy campers.

So what are the qualities, habits, and processes which make a truly great boss? And do natural born leaders have these characteristics ingrained in their DNA, or can these be developed through experience and learning over years of managing? We've asked 18 executives from a variety of companies to share their secrets.

If you want some super practical tips on how you can develop your leadership and be a great boss, check out our free eBook. [Download our "How to Be a Super Boss" eBook to inspire the best in your employees.](#)

1. Be Human

"A few things that helped me build a great relationship with my staff was to be genuine and transparent. Don't lead people on, and be clear with your requests and demands. Just because

you're the boss, doesn't mean you're better in any way. Allow your people to help you become great. Stay grounded and keep your ego under control and help them become great as well. *Encourage free thought and creativity.* Listen to all suggestions and again, put your ego aside."

– Michael Senderovich, *President at [Zeyger Insurance](#)*

2. Practice Empathy

"If you place yourself in your employees' shoes and create a working environment that you would love to be in, chances are you will be an amazing boss. Literally, close your eyes and dream up your dream job and try and create that scenario as often as you can, and you will have highly engaged happy people running your organization."

– [Hajmil \(Haj\) Carr](#), *CEO of [Trueline Publishing](#)*

3. Listen and Act on Employee Feedback

"I love to listen to my employee's feedback and to integrate it into how we run the business. I believe that my team members are my best connection to our customers and I value them beyond measure. I also value my team as individuals. I care about their lives and I spend time with them. I believe that this gives me a connection to them and them a connection to me that is beyond 'just business'. I believe that it is my team that has made our business what it is and I express that with a lot of gratitude!"

– [Deborah Sweeney](#), *CEO of [My Corporation](#)*

4. Be Consistent

"I've worked in both multinational and SME companies and there is nothing more frustrating than a leader that doesn't show consistency. This applies to both their working style and promises. There is nothing more demoralizing for an employee than being promised something and the company not delivering. One company that I worked for was changing brands and senior management promised an update every week on the process. There were no further updates and moral tanked."

– [Tom Sadler](#), Sales and Marketing Director at [Indago Digital](#)

5. Challenge Your Employees

“A great boss inspires and empowers their team to take initiative, challenges existing ways of thinking and accepts greater responsibility. Things like active listening, regular check-ins and creating a psychologically safe place for team members to share their ideas are all qualities that make for happy and engaged employees. When you create a workplace where people love to be, you can effectively manufacture happiness.”

– [Logan Merrick](#), CEO of [Buzinga Apps](#)

6. Communicate Clearly

“Being a great boss involves clear communication based on three things: What did we accomplish from the last meeting? What are we currently working to accomplish? Are there any obstacles to our current goals? As a boss, my role is to remove obstacles to the success of my team. I am invested in their success, and this naturally makes for a great relationship between boss and employee.”

– [Alani Kuye](#), CEO at [pHlatbed Inc.](#)

7. Recognition

Positive affirmation is a basic human need.

We crave positive feedback for our efforts and glow when they're recognized. From a managerial perspective, financial rewards are a great way to appreciate efforts, but it's more of a short term objective rather than coming from a warm fuzzy place of real authentic recognition. An effective approach when recognizing an employee's hard work is to catch it in the moment. Be specific when you're thanking them and always relate it back to the bigger picture. “Recognition is more effective when it's given in the context of a business-results-focused activity”

– [Meghan M. Biro](#), Forbes

“The key to being a great boss is acknowledging employees

strengths, and not creating constant competition between employees. When staff members feel appreciated they will always produce great work. As a business owner, I demand my management to do weekly evaluations with staff. If your employees are not happy with work conditions you can expect your company to fail.”

– [Michelle Hunter](#), Owner at [SBH Media and Music](#)

8. Create an Open Sharing Space

“I think it’s important to establish a strong relationship based on trust and respect with your employees. I tend to make my employees feel like my equal without losing the balance of power to gain respect and authority. I want everyone to feel comfortable addressing things with me and coming to me with issues. I like having an open forum for people to talk and resolve conflicts. It’s common that individuals will have varying opinions, but it’s important to address those feelings and to also make them feel safe and comfortable.”

– [Amy Medeiros](#), Marketing Manager at [Broadband Search](#)

It can be difficult to break out of the leader-follower mindset at the workplace, and research has found that “only rare, ‘transformational leaders’ are able to prevent employees from being excessively reliant on their bosses” ([Drew Hendricks](#), Forbes). Cultivating staff that feels empowered and self-guided can be challenging.

The cornerstones in building a culture that allows empowerment comes from building trust and cultivating the executive mentality.

Chances are, most of your employees aren’t thinking at an executive level as they’re focused on their own tasks. Being transparent in helping them understand the bigger picture and goals you’re driving them toward empowers them to enter the executive mindset.

9. Provide Freedom

“I think the secret to being a good boss is empowering your workers. If you’re constantly looking over their shoulder micromanaging, they’ll always be scared of messing up. They’re going to do just enough to get by, scared to even think about going the extra mile. All their time will be focused on not getting in trouble as opposed to excelling. Give your workers a longer leash, so to speak. Set expectations and trust them to meet them. You’ll be surprised how a little freedom will increase performance.”

– [Eric Brantner](#), Founder of [Scribblrs](#)

10. Avoid Micro-Managing

Studies have shown that true personal satisfaction comes from self-chosen goals which is the kind of motivation employers should encourage toward their staff. This intrinsic motivation harbours creativity and a deeper understanding of the task at hand. “It turns out that it isn’t so much actual freedom of choice that matters when creating intrinsic motivation but the *feeling* of choice” ([Heidi Grant Halvorson](#), Forbes). Micro-managing eliminates employees deciding how they will reach the goal and removes the feeling of choice necessary to feel intrinsically motivated.

Monitoring their every move actually ends up impeding their ability to grow.

“I don’t micro-manage. I give my employees tasks and then trust them to carry them out. This empowers them. I will hold them accountable when needed, otherwise, if they are getting the work done, it’s fine with me.”

– [Amir Watynski](#), Owner at [Watt Media](#)

11. Communicate with Every Employee

“A CEO blog, that you write yourself, is an effective method of communicating strategy and progress. When you visit other regions or departments, use your blog to highlight what you observed and discovered with insights on the people you met

and the great work they are doing. Employee engagement should be personal and public. In larger organizations, you can't meet everyone one on one but you can talk publicly of those you have. Their co-workers will know who they are and by extension will feel personally valued too."

– [Maria Bellissimo-Magrin](#), Founder at [Belgrin](#)

12. Know Your People

As a manager, before you start changing processes or implementing new efficiencies, it's crucial you spend some time getting to know who your people are. There's no point introducing new procedures if you don't know how the stakeholders operate.

Not knowing your employees is like buying a piece of furniture from Ikea and throwing out the blueprint.

You need to understand how they work before putting the strategy together. Find out what makes them tick and what truly motivates them. Getting to know employees on both a professional and personal level will have a much more positive effect on your relationship.

"Make a point of meeting with each person one-on-one every week for an hour. Use that time to catch up on work matters, but also personal details. Ask about their soccer games and things that matter to staff members. Be sure to use it as a sharing and coaching time rather than a status check. These meetings can be valuable places to collaborate for better outcomes, and head off any problems before they arise. When the team is virtual, use Skype Facetime, or Jobvibe to build a sense of connection."

– [Jean Marrapodi](#), Chief Learning Architect at [Applestar Productions](#)

13. Foster an Inclusive Culture

"A basic desire of practically every person in this world is to feel important. In the workplace, employees want to do

meaningful work that contributes to the greater good of the company. Therefore, creating and maintaining a culture where the sharing of ideas is not just accepted, but encouraged, should be a top priority for any leader.

Gone are the days of the omniscient, omnipotent CEO who makes all significant decisions independently.

Rather, contemporary organizations that foster a supportive, collaborative culture and value the ideas that a diverse workforce can offer achieve greater levels of success and sustainability than their rivals.”

– [Scott Sette](#), Partner at [DHR International](#)

14. Personalize Your Mentoring

“Often I see managers train and mentor every employee in the same cookie-cutter fashion while then holding employees to different levels of expectations based on the employee’s personality or communication skills. I like to flip that thinking and hold every employee to the same standards but personalize how I mentor and train based on how I have learned each of them best receives and digests feedback from others. It allows me to remain fair in holding the same standards for each of my employees but still be cognizant that each person learns and communicates in their own way.”

– [Christine Rochelle](#), Director of Digital Marketing and Operations at [Lotus823](#)

15. Be Flexible

“Being a great boss is like an elastic band. When the team is under high stress and pressure, your job is to hold everything together. Like the elastic band other times your role is to stretch, stretch the team. Allowing the team to experiment and try new approaches. Finally, like an elastic a good boss snaps their team back to reality when needed. This could mean snapping back to the bigger picture or the task at hand.”

– [Nicholas Klisht](#), Director at [Coverticulture](#)

16. Celebrate Work Anniversaries

“Setting up alerts will allow you to (at the very least) acknowledge their contribution to the team in an email or card, or perhaps a small gift. I’ve set mine for 10 days prior to each team member’s actual anniversary date.”

– [Emma Still](#), Team Leader at [Seer Interactive](#)

17. Don’t Sweat the Small Stuff

“My mantra as a business owner has always been to avoid sweating the small stuff and to move forward in a positive direction. A positive work environment is essential to your success and longevity as a business. If you create a positive office dynamic, this will enable you to attract and retain top talent, allowing your business to thrive. When your employees are happier, they do better work, and this leads to happy clients, which is the crucial key to any successful business.”

– [Brock Murray](#), Co-Founder at [seoplus+](#)

18. Be honest

“There’s nothing worse than beating around the bush when something is wrong or being wishy-washy if something is going right. A good boss can always be honest with their staff as to their performance so that they can continuously improve their weaknesses and leverage their strengths. So when things don’t go well, have a frank discussion as to how it can be avoided in the future. And when things are awesome, celebrate the individual and team achievement. If you’re honest in good times and in bad, everyone will know exactly where they stand. This eliminates anxiety for you and for your staff.”

– [Magda Walczak](#), CCO at [Search Party](#)

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