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HOW TO BECOME A FAVORITE BOSS

When you ask people about their favorite bosses, their eyes light up and they say things like:



She always made me feel like she had my back.



He challenged me to do things I didn't think I was capable of.

She made me feel included, she appreciated my input, and I felt like I could almost do no wrong when working with her. My confidence soared.

These descriptions focus on who that person *is*, not necessarily what that person *did*. It's leaders' *beingness*, no *doingness*, that makes them great. In other words, change your focus from "What I am doing?" to "Who am I being?" at any given time when it comes to effectively leading others. Respect, sincerity, and selflessness are all a function of your beingness; if you come from that healthy perspective, you'll naturally *do* all the things that make great leaders great. So, as a new manager, the first question to ask yourself should be, "Who



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am I, and who do I choose to be in light of this concept called *management* and *leadership*?” Likewise, remember that it is leadership *through*, not management *over*, that should be your goal. Your ability to expand your personal impact on your organization grows exponentially when given the honor to serve—and lead—others to success. From this point forward, your individual success is measured by the performance and productivity of your team. Now that’s an exciting concept!

As we prepare to launch our journey into leadership and management, let’s start with the end goal in mind. Look to American poet Maya Angelou’s famous words as guideposts to your own leadership style: “People will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.” Think about it: Would you want to work for you? If the whole company followed your lead, would you be happy with where you took it? To quote spiritual author Neale Donald Walsch, what you want for yourself, give to another. Teach what you choose to learn. And when in doubt, err on the side of compassion. It’s that simple. And leadership can be that much more meaningful and rewarding when you’re both modeling leadership behaviors and conduct for others and paying it forward by growing future generations of leaders in their own right. This, then, is the essence of successful leadership, the mindset you need going forward to influence those you’re privileged to serve. Selfless leadership is your goal, which we’ll explore in its many facets throughout this book.

Especially in times of crisis—whether it’s a financial crisis, a global pandemic, or something specific to your industry or business—new managers drive the way forward. You need to maintain open communication, build a stronger team (especially if you’re working remotely), and produce and measure performance results. In times of crisis or change, you face additional challenges—for example:

- loss of safety and security
- loss of control due to unpredictable events
- lack of emotional and social support (and feelings of loneliness and isolation)
- loss of peers and friends due to unexpected turnover
- overwork, exhaustion, or lack of self-care

You need to not only manage performance but also demonstrate the soft skills of listening, empathy, and genuine concern for your employees. Here's what your communication and leadership strategy might focus on during difficult times:

- Communicate organizational resources, like your organization's employee assistance program (EAP), or local resources such as pastoral care and social services.
- Be a calming influence for your team by introducing moments of pause or meditation.
- Form "battle-buddy" relationships. Pair up remote team members and ensure that people have each other's backs at all times and feel connected to one another.
- Help people change their perspective so they'll change their perception of current events. Talk about how this, too, shall pass. Take your people out of the weeds and up to the thirty-thousand-foot level so they can see and appreciate the broader changes at hand. Encourage people to think about where we will be one to five years from now when we look back on this time. How can your team use this period to develop their careers and skills? How can they turn lemons into lemonade?

It's also important to motivate employees so they can focus on the work itself because striving to meet goals—and achieving those

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goals—helps build confidence. Help your people become resume builders by codifying their accomplishments and developing an achievement mindset. To that end, follow some of these best practices when leading your team, either in person or remotely:

- Create a shared document where everyone on the team can document their weekly progress, roadblocks, and achievements. Use it for celebration and recognition.
- Assign different staff members to lead weekly staff meetings and make them responsible for the agenda and follow-up items.
- Catch people being good: recognition and appreciation for a job well done provide the “psychic income” that’s so important for people to thrive in their roles.
- Schedule quarterly progress meetings on annual goals, roadblocks, and achievements as well as career and professional goals (using what are known as IDPs, or individual development plans).
- Seek to increase awareness of diversity and inclusion, multigenerational communication, and the importance of laughter and camaraderie in the workplace.
- Ensure that remote workers’ work-life balance needs are being met (for example, by not working all hours of the night) and that nonexempt employees adhere strictly to wage and hour guidelines for meal and rest periods as well as overtime.

More than ever, people are looking to their leaders and managers in business to respond quickly and proactively. This is the time to lean in, lead through the changes coming your way, show compassion for others, exercise the selflessness necessary to coach and mentor, and ensure high levels of individual and team performance. Help your employees process their physical and mental reactions stemming

from fear and uncertainty and focus on performance, productivity, and shared achievements. Redefine your leadership and communication style so that others look to you as that special boss; that individual who taught them how to lead, pivot, and bend through a crisis; and that leader who had their backs and encouraged them to discover their personal best through challenging times. Remember that the greatest leaders are not the ones with the most followers; they're the ones who create the most leaders in turn. You can be that inspirational leader, that transformative leader, that turnaround leader for others. And in doing so, you'll develop the greatest level of career satisfaction possible. The opportunity to lead and manage is an opportunity to touch others' lives and pay it forward like no other in the workplace. Mastering leadership begins and ends with becoming someone's favorite boss. With that concept in mind, let's figure out together how to get this done.