

How to manage a bad boss

Don't let a bad boss derail your career

The uninterested and powerless boss

The profile: This type of boss doesn't really know you and can't help you. Such bosses are preoccupied with managing their own career, and often insecure about their own position. As a result, they will call on you only to do what they need done. If things go wrong, they may even direct the blame your way.

One thing is certain: they cannot or will not advocate your work effectively. The implication is that you can be overlooked for new assignments, promotions or bonuses.

The solution: This manager needs to know that you are not a threat. Do your job well, and show this type of boss you are an ally who only has respect for him or her. Make sure you have other supporters in the organisation who will back you up, because this manager won't.

The influential egomaniac

The profile: These managers are the most dangerous. Their ego and arrogance convince them that their way is the only way, leaving them unwilling to see alternatives or new ideas.

They have a false belief that their rules are the only ones that matter. Their arrogance can sometimes result in them bending the rules, maybe even asking you to do the same. They manage upward and, for some reason, command influence in the organisation. They often manage to a self-serving goal. You are never sure if you can trust this manager.

This type of boss wants you to comply with his or her agenda. Such bosses will not give you useful

feedback, guidance or support, unless it serves them. If you do not play to this person's ego, you can end up overlooked and unsupported. On the other hand, if you completely acquiesce to gain his or her support, you can end up compromising yourself.

The solution: Bosses like this require subtle management. When I encountered such a boss I chose to stay below the radar. I did not pursue activities that were not in alignment with my principles, but I did not advertise that either. Avoiding this type of manager is not a long-term strategy unless you want to go unnoticed. In my case, I sought out other opportunities. Size up the situation early and decide whether you can live with and cater to this manager's ego, or whether you need to leave.

When working for a "bad boss" it helps to remember these three things:

- **Micro managers** want to feel they are in control and receive comfort from **information**.
- **Uninterested and powerless** bosses feel fearful and need to be **reassured**.
- The **influential egomaniac** needs to feel powerful and thrives on **acknowledgement** and **acquiescence**.

When working for any manager, good or bad, a key principle is this: Do not rely on your boss to be your sole supporter. Develop multiple advocates for your career who know you and your capabilities.

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WE have all had a bad boss. They come in all shapes, sizes and genders. Some micromanage, others do not manage at all. Most hardly give useful feedback or guidance.

A bad boss is one who does not support you in tough situations or recognise your work with promotions, raises or bonuses. If you are good at your work, some may even keep you in your current job much longer than is good for you because it helps them.

But there is hope. Your career can survive a bad boss. You just need to manage it.

Three types of bad bosses

The micromanager

The profile: The micromanager wants to control everything, including you. They watch what time you arrive and leave, give specific instructions on what to do, want to see your work all the time, and sometimes even redo it without telling you why.

Such a boss may limit your visibility, fail to give you credit for your good work, and criticise you for the smallest things. I once had a boss who reprimanded me for not choosing a flexible work schedule that aligned with his. Flexible work hours were a stated company policy. My start time was only 15 minutes different from his. This type of boss leaves you feeling devalued, disempowered and dejected.

The solution: Manage the micromanager by giving them all the required information, while asking if they'd like more detail. Over-communicate. This kind of boss worries when there is silence. Accommodate by telling him or her things that really matter. Comply with the easy things.

But do not give this person too much control over you. You don't have to accommodate every single request. I maintained my work hours to fit my schedule and we ended up getting along just fine. I always let him know that the important things were being handled.