

THE GOOD BOSS REPORT 05-06

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Good Boss Company is a campaigning consultancy group formed in 2005 as a centre of excellence in research into bosses' behaviour. It offers leading-edge learning resources and materials, training and coaching, to improve bosses' capability in the UK.

Published By

THE GOOD BOSS COMPANY

info@goodbosscompany.co.uk
www.goodbosscompany.co.uk

FOREWORD

We undertook this research to understand how UK employees rate their bosses and to review the extent to which line managers' and leaders' behaviour, positive or negative, affects employees' morale, commitment and productivity. We also wanted to determine whether Britain's bosses are on the whole 'good' or 'bad' and why they behave the way they do.

Our study reveals that a good boss is a prerequisite for a happy and engaged workforce. A good boss has the power to make employees feel positive about both their job and their organisation. A bad boss, however, can have a devastating impact on employees' feelings about their roles, on their performance in that role and how they fit within their workplaces.

Despite organisations' substantial and continuing investment in leadership development, the training they provide is clearly missing the mark; Britain's bosses need to go back to basics to understand the importance of softer skills such as better communication, and core values such as integrity and trustworthiness. Where bosses lack these, the potential for damage to both employees (whose increasing stress levels are already well documented) and the organisation is huge.

These findings are a call to action for organisations to get their bosses in order. A simple change in attitude that sees bosses more willing to listen, support and develop their teams will increase employees' motivation to do a good job and reduce their feelings of anger and frustration.

Andrea Gregory and Lisa Smale,
founding partners,
The Good Boss Company

Commenting on the findings, Ruth Spellman, CEO of Investors in People, the organisation which sets standards for business to advance performance through its people, says:

“Employees are an organisation's most valuable asset and, if managed effectively, can be its major source of competitive edge. But Britain's bosses are failing to recognise this, and their poor leadership and management skills are alienating rather than motivating their people. This is an issue that employers must address, so that bosses aid rather than undermine progress towards business goals.”

MAIN FINDINGS

Our findings highlight the state of the employee - boss relationship, with few rating their bosses highly:

- Nearly one in four of Britain's bosses are bad or dreadful, according to UK employees, and only 4% would rate their bosses 10 out of 10.
- Nearly half (48%) of employees with a bad boss think they are bad because they are in the wrong job.
- More than half (58%) have actually looked for another job because of their bad bosses, while nearly three quarters (71%) of those who believe their bosses are good feel satisfied or very satisfied with their jobs.
- Employees believe the main causes of their bad bosses' behaviour are: poor training and development (44%), poor management by their own bosses (44%), overworked (34%) and under-staffing (28%).
- The type of boss someone has is one of the primary drivers of their motivation and productivity. It doesn't matter nearly as much how great the organisation's products and services are or how exciting its plans for future development. The thing that has the most impact on productivity and staff retention is whether or not someone has a good boss (or not).
- What makes line managers a 'good boss' in the eyes of their staff is not necessarily what makes them a good employee in the eyes of their own boss. Their own performance is probably measured on decision making, influence, and planning, (as well as results) which are all ranked as less important by employees.
- The boss' own lack of time, may mean that they sacrifice the 'good boss' behaviours in the hope of getting results from their team - for example by driving them too hard. What bad bosses don't realise is that this will have a negative impact on results, albeit in a more subtle way.

BOSSSES' BEHAVIOUR

IMPACT ON MORALE

The impact bosses have on employees' feelings towards their jobs and their workplaces is huge. Bosses' behaviour can mean the difference between a happy and engaged workforce and a disenfranchised and demotivated one:

- Three quarters (75%) of employees with good bosses feel good or great about their organisation compared to just a quarter (24%) of those with bad bosses
- Nearly three quarters (71%) of employees with good bosses say they feel motivated to do a good job, 12 times more than those with bad bosses (just 6%)
- Nearly half (49%) of employees with bad bosses feel dissatisfied with their job; just 12% of those with good bosses feel the same
- Employees with good bosses feel 10 times more valued (79%) than those with bad bosses (only 8%)
- Only one in a 100 (1%) employees say their bad bosses have made them feel proud, compared to two in five (40%) of employees with good bosses
- Around three quarters (74%) of employees with bad bosses say they have made them feel angry, compared to less than one fifth (18%) of those with good bosses
- Nearly half (46%) of employees with bad bosses feel worthless, compared to just 4% of those with good bosses.

IMPACT ON PRODUCTIVITY AND RETENTION

The effect bad bosses have on employees can range from office unrest and loss of effort to faked sick days and hunting for new jobs. Clearly there are serious implications for productivity:

- More than half (58%) of employees with bad bosses have looked for another job to escape from them, compared to just 15% of those with good bosses
- More than two fifths (44%) of employees with bad bosses have put in less effort than they might have done, compared to just over a fifth (22%) of those with good bosses
- A third (33%) of workers with bad bosses have faked sick days, compared to just one in 10 (10%) of those with good bosses
- Over two thirds (68%) of employees with bad bosses complain about them to their colleagues, compared to just a fifth (20%) of those with good bosses.

Employees' views of their bosses' decision-making paint a bleak picture of the UK workplace. A clear lack of interpersonal skills and basic support cause staff to view their bosses in a poor light. Employees say the following are behaviour traits their bad bosses display:

- Over two fifths of bad bosses (41 %) are bullies some of the time
- Over a third (38%) are inclined to publicly criticise or humiliate them
- Over two fifths (45%) are not good listeners
- Nearly half (47%) are tactless
- Over a third (38%) take credit for others' work
- Over half (54%) over-promise and under-deliver
- Nearly two thirds (59%) provide no career development
- Over half (53%) rarely or never offer support or guidance

Even where bosses are good, there is still room for improvement:

- Only 55% of 'good' bosses care about their employees' welfare and only 51% are honest and open.

WORST BOSS TRAITS

THE DREAM BOSS..

- Defends their team when necessary
- Doesn't let personal stuff affect their work
- Gives credit where it's due
- Supports career development
- Always supports team members
- Is cheerful and positive
- Is gently persuasive
- Challenges decisions they disagree with
- Faces up to difficulties as necessary
- Has reasonable expectations

THE NIGHTMARE BOSS..

- Leaves things to the last minute
- Provides little or no direction
- Goes for easy quick-fix solutions
- Keeps changing decisions, plans and policies
- Is stressed out by their own lack of organisational skills
- Disregards need for work-life balance
- Is poor at identifying priorities
- Provides no career options
- Over-commits the team
- Delegates difficult or unpleasant tasks

RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION

Well-trained and skilful recruiters will assess candidates against a set of defined behavioural competencies to ensure they are the right fit for your organisation.

GET THE MOST FROM TRAINING

Be clear about the outcomes; what will the training deliver? what behaviours should change? Training teams together rather than individually will help team-building. Investing in training for first-time managers will ensure they start as they mean to go on and bad habits will be avoided.

PROMOTE THE RIGHT PEOPLE

When making your people new managers, consider whether you are doing so for all the right reasons; are they being recognised for their technical competency alone, eg they've exceeded their sales targets again, or because they have shown a consistent talent for leading and inspiring people?

GIVE GOOD FEEDBACK

Talk about what your people are doing well and what areas need more work. Be honest and constructive.

MANAGE BY EXAMPLE

Are you a good role model for your managers? Take a look at how you do things and consider whether you need further personal development.

CELEBRATE ROLE MODELS

Identify senior managers who can act as role models for the behaviour you expect of your managers.

PROMOTE DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

All managers will benefit from development. Combine formal, tailored management programmes and informal sessions, through a mentoring programme, for example.

IMPLEMENT (OR REVIEW) A SET OF MANAGEMENT COMPETENCIES

These will guide the behaviours expected of a good manager and underpin how your organisation operates.

USE 360 DEGREE OR 180 DEGREE FEEDBACK

Extend your managers' awareness beyond their own manager/s and self-assessment. Getting feedback from other team members may add some fresh perspective.

SHIFT THE EMPHASIS

It is not just what results you deliver, but how. Gear your reward and remuneration package towards results that are achieved through the required skills and behaviour. Stay focused on these and ensure you deliver consistent messages which reinforce their importance.

TIPS FOR EMPLOYERS

CHANGE YOUR MINDSET

Ever thought why your boss behaves the way they do? Perhaps it is because they feel outside their comfort zone and do not realise the impact their behaviour has.

BEHAVIOUR BREEDS BEHAVIOUR

Act with your boss the way you want them to act with you. You may be surprised by the response.

KEEP A RECORD

Make a note of what your boss does or says which is unacceptable and how it makes you feel. Is there a pattern? Perhaps events occur when your boss is most stressed, such as just before a management meeting. Share this information with your boss; perhaps a quick drink after work on neutral ground will help you see you have more in common than you thought and help you break down the barriers you currently face.

DON'T REACT EMOTIONALLY

Take a step back and allow time to reflect on what has just happened. What your boss says may be valid but the way they say it may be inappropriate or unacceptable. Again share the information with your boss to find alternatives.

SET UP REGULAR MEETINGS OR PROGRESS REPORTS

Take time to update each other on projects you are working on. Developing your relationship in these sessions will improve how you work together as a whole.

WORK WITH YOUR BOSS, NOT AGAINST

You will be surprised how much doing joint work promotes rapport and helps you understand each other better.

CONFIDE IN A COLLEAGUE

Sometimes just talking issues through with a trusted workmate can add a different perspective. Be careful not to stir up ill feeling within your team though; make sure your discussion remains confidential.

TALK TO YOUR BOSS'S BOSS OR A MEMBER OF HR

If nothing else works, it is time to take the next step. Plan what you want to say and talk about your boss's behaviour, not about them as a person. Use specific examples to illustrate your points.

TIPS FOR EMPLOYEES

VERBATIMS:

NEGATIVE

- A previous boss has made me feel belittled and angry. At one time I was considering looking for another job until he left.
- Given impossible deadlines and ridiculed when unable to meet them.
- Shouted at in office. Lost respect for him for this.
- My previous boss did not seem to respect or trust the staff.
- Told me I was useless.
- A previous boss made me redundant but I found out on the grapevine before he told me.
- He refuses to acknowledge that he has made a wrong decision and will not be challenged on anything.
- My boss hates to delegate any responsibility to anyone but himself!! He likes to control every situation!
- Blamed me for someone else's error. Made me feel worthless and angry.
- My ex-boss was a nightmare. She would always put people down and made a few people cry. Working late every night was expected and if you had to leave due to an engagement you were complained about to every other member of staff. The turnover was extremely high which impacted on the success of the company.
- Belittled and ridiculed me for failing at a task that I was never properly trained to do and did not wish to do.
- Took credit for a project that I dreamt up and denied it was my suggestion.
- Set unachievable deadlines.
- Taken credit for my work.
- Bullying which affected me a great deal - I resigned in the end.
- My name for my boss is "last minute dot com" because everything is left to the last minute.

POSITIVE

- Always tries to help, very progressive. In all I am happier at work now than I have ever been. I have been working for 34 years.
- My current boss has been very supportive of my work/home life.
- Giving the chance to change jobs, and backing me when I make mistakes.

THEGOODBOSSCOMPANY

The Old Post House
Heath Road
Weybridge
Surrey KT13 8TS

01932 264698
info@goodbosscompany.co.uk
www.goodbosscompany.co.uk