

# SmartBlog on Leadership

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## Do you have BBS (Bad Boss Syndrome)?

By Joel Garfinkle on April 15th, 2013

Do your employees stop talking and look uncomfortable when you walk into the coffee room? Does everyone but you go out for drinks after work? Is your boss checking up on you more frequently than usual? Do your projects seem to be stuck in quicksand?

If you answered “yes” to any of these questions, you may have (horrors!) Bad Boss Syndrome. But relax, the condition is curable. Let’s look at some of the characteristics of a good boss and see how you might be able to reverse the trend in just a few short steps.

- 1. A good boss praises in public. A job well done deserves to be recognized.** Employees will knock themselves out for a boss who gives them kudos in staff meetings. They’ll crawl through broken glass for a boss who tells his boss how great they are.
- 2. A good boss critiques in private.** Never single anyone out for criticism in a group. Schedule a one-on-one and share responsibility for the breakdown. “How could we have done this better?” is a great way to start.
- 3. A good boss acts like a peer.** A lot of bosses can’t get out of their egos. They flaunt their power, act like they’re above it all, and remain emotionally distant from the rank and file. That kind of behavior diminishes you as a leader. It makes you seem small, and keeps you from connecting with your people. Adopt a “we’re all in this together” mentality.
- 4. A good boss will do whatever it takes. Your subordinates need to know you’ve got their back,** no matter what. If a client threatens to leave, you’re there to help save the day. If the team’s high-profile project is about to implode, you help them come up with a plan to save it. If your department is suddenly told to cut 20% from the budget, you take a haircut along with everyone else.
- 5. A good boss shares her story.** Your subordinates need and want to learn from you. You’re part coach, part mentor, but all human. They need to hear about your failures as well as your successes, and what you’ve learned from both.
- 6. A good boss delegates responsibility.** You hear a lot about “the art of effective delegation.” Often, that just means pushing some of the tasks you’re too busy to do down

the ladder a rung or two. Instead, give your people responsibility for significant projects and hold them accountable for results.

7. **A good boss lets the stars shine.** The quickest way to move up the ladder yourself is to make sure you're developing the people who are coming along behind you. Encourage people to develop their strengths, whether through training or experience or both. Show them the path ahead. Give them big-picture input, so that they understand the company as a whole, not just their piece of it.

8. **A good boss is a cheerleader for the team.** Steve Jobs told the first Macintosh design team that they were there "to make a dent in the universe." And indeed they did. Your team players need to feel they are on a mission and that you will champion their cause until they make a dent in your universe.

Have you ever experienced Bad Boss Syndrome? If so, what did your boss do? If you've been blessed with a good boss, what characteristics did you benefit from? **Share your thoughts and stories in the comments section.**

***Joel Garfinkle** is the author of seven books, including **"Getting Ahead: Three Steps to Take Your Career to the Next Level."** He has 17 years of executive-coaching experience, most recently helping a newly promoted director learn to develop and retain top performers while creating successful peer relationships. More than 10,000 people receive his Fulfillment@Work newsletter. **Subscribe** and you'll receive his free e-book "41 Proven Strategies to Get Promoted Now."*