Your 3 Imperatives as a Manager
Making Sense of Your Journey

Mastering the Challenges of Being a Great Boss

Excerpted from
Being the Boss:
The 3 Imperatives for Becoming a Great Leader

By
Linda A. Hill and Kent Lineback

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7:52 a.m. Jason picks up his phone messages. The first came at 9:25 p.m. yesterday from Dr. Schmidt, a computer scientist at a major U.S. university who’s on the Project Emerge editorial advisory board. Speaking rapidly, Schmidt presents a litany of problems with the outline of the initial course, Introduction to Programming. The second message is from Barry Hultgrund, a call Jason didn’t take when it came earlier. Barry is the finance analyst assigned full-time to Project Emerge—he more or less works for Jason—and he’s reminding Jason that preliminary budget numbers are due today for the next fiscal year, which begins in less than four months.

Jason feels another twinge of anxiety. He knows the budget is looming but he forgot the numbers are due today. He adds it to his list.

7:58 a.m. Jason sends an e-mail to Sumantra Tata, his senior editor, telling him to get back right away to Dr. Schmidt, the adviser who called, and reminding him it’s the second message from Schmidt in two days.
8:00 a.m.  Jason receives a call from Jacques Levanger, his contact and a senior official at the IFTE. Levanger has been out all week until today; he and Jason are scheduled to meet on Monday when Jason will take the train to Paris, where the IFTE is headquartered. Levanger is calling to ask whether there’s a problem, because, like Jason, he arrived at the office early and found a message from Dr. Schmidt. Jason tells Levanger he’ll be in touch with Schmidt today. “Yes, please do,” says Levanger. “We don’t need more problems with Project Emerge now. In any case, I look forward to our meeting.”

Jason adds a note about Schmidt and the IFTE to his list. The International Fund for Technical Education is a strategic partner crucial to Project Emerge. Funded by the aid organizations of the world’s largest economies, philanthropic foundations, and international companies desperate for skilled local talent, its strategy is to jump-start commercial interest in markets that might not yet seem attractive. For Jason, the IFTE’s specific role and critical contribution is to help create partnerships between Project Emerge and the over two thousand local educational institutions in its network.

8:05 a.m.  Jason’s mobile vibrates. A text message from Laraba Sule, Project Emerge marketing manager. A Nigerian who attended the London School of Economics, she’s worked in media and marketing at Reynolds for eight years and is a recent mother who works flextime. Her message reads, “We want to conduct an orientation session at International Sales Conference for the sales team assigned to help sell our programming course. But people in sales claim no time is available on the agenda. Please approach Mr. Jack Cavit about this important matter. It is very important for our plans.”

Jason sighs. This is not good news. Cavit is vice president of international sales, and his people pitch instructors at schools outside North America to adopt Reynolds’ materials for their courses. Every publisher’s sales live or die on the attention received from these people. Sales Conference, where they all gather to learn about coming new products, is a critical forum for convincing them yours is worth their interest. Publishers vie to
get on the agenda. Other publishing groups have apparently convinced Cavit they’re more important than Project Emerge.

8:09 a.m. Jason looks at Cavit’s online calendar and sees that he’s not free today and will be traveling next week. With apprehension, Jason calls Cavit’s assistant, gets no answer, and leaves a phone message asking for a callback ASAP.

8:12 a.m. Jason leaves a note on the desk of his assistant, Kim Young, asking Kim to bring in the analyses Jason assigned to various people earlier in the week.

8:16 a.m. Glancing at his laptop, Jason sees a new e-mail from Sumantra, who’s forwarding an e-mail exchange with Kathy Wu, an assistant editor in New York assigned half-time to Project Emerge. Wu’s role, as Jason understands it so far, is to identify and take a first look at possible additional courses for the Project Emerge portfolio. Sumantra insists that she works for him. She insists that she works for the project publisher. Sumantra ends his e-mail to Jason with “We must have a VERY serious talk about this VERY soon. Please let me know your pleasure.”

8:19 a.m. Jason adds this to his list in the section for miscellaneous problems that includes a potpourri of other issues about salaries, performance reviews, promotions, sour work relationships, family problems, and who should get an empty cubicle with windows. He’s put off dealing with any of these until he gets to know people better. He’s still figuring out whom he can trust, who’s good and who’s not.

8:23 a.m. Jason tries Cavit’s assistant again. She’s just in and Jason explains why it’s important that he talk to Cavit.

“Project Emerge,” he says, “is supposed to have four sales people assigned to it full-time for three months. They’ll work with the IFTE in placing the new Project Emerge programming course with schools in the IFTE network. And we’re supposed to run an orientation session for them at Sales Conference. But no salespeople have been assigned so far, and now I’m hearing there’s no time available at Sales Conference.”

Cavit’s assistant promises to check with her boss and get back.

As he hangs up the phone, Jason realizes that if nothing happens at the conference and the salespeople can’t get started on
schedule, it will throw into doubt all the projections for the coming academic year. And if Project Emerge is in trouble, he thinks, then his position, his career at Reynolds Ed, is in trouble too.

In the introduction, we said becoming a manager is a difficult journey of personal transformation that requires you to learn from experience over a long period, typically years, a journey most managers stop short of completing.

But why is management so difficult?

**What Is Management and Why Is It Difficult?**

What makes management difficult isn’t the idea of management. That couldn’t be more straightforward.

*Management is responsibility for the performance of a group of people.* It’s a simple idea. The people you manage do the work and you’re responsible. Yet, if the idea isn’t difficult, putting it into practice is. Why? Because . . .

To carry out this responsibility, you must influence others, which means you must make a difference not only in what they do but in the thoughts and feelings that drive their actions. Management is defined by responsibility but it’s done by exerting influence. That, in a nutshell, is what you do as a boss—influence others in ways that make them more productive as individuals and, especially, as a group. Thus, the central question we address in *Being the Boss* is this: *How* do you exert influence? *What* do managers actually do to shape and even change the behavior, thoughts, and feelings of others?

Watching real managers in action provides clues but no clear answers to these questions. We know from systematic observation that managers spend their time in an unending parade of mostly small events consisting mainly of person-to-person interactions, the majority of them unplanned encounters, with a wide variety of people, and covering a seemingly random mix of topics.
Half the managers’ activities took mere minutes to complete. Only a small percentage received more than an hour.¹

Even at higher levels of an organization, general managers who run significant business units spend 70 to 90 percent of their working time with others, face-to-face, on the phone, conferencing on the Web, or interacting online through e-mail or more sophisticated social networking tools. Whatever form they take, most of their interactions are reactive, not proactive; many are interruptions. Most interchanges are quick; a single topic seldom gets more than ten minutes. Even brief exchanges typically cover a wide range of topics, both business and nonbusiness. The business issues discussed are a mix of the trivial, mundane, and important. Rarely is any subject explored in great depth. Time working alone occurs mostly at home, while commuting, or when traveling for work.

In all their interactions, managers rarely make definitive major decisions. They do spend much time trying to influence people, but mostly by asking, requesting, kidding, cajoling, nudging, persuading, and coercing—almost anything but issuing direct orders, which they do rarely.

Because much of what they do is fragmented and unpredictable, what they actually do is often different from what they planned to do. As one manager said, “Each day I go into the office with some preplanned action and at the end of the day, I have to regret that all the various things I [did] are very different.”²

Many managers think the problem is their lack of knowledge, experience, or skill, especially their inability to manage time. In fact, the problem in large part is the fundamental nature of management itself, which at virtually all levels is unavoidably pressured, time-constrained, fragmented, and hectic.

So forget the notion that managerial work is organized, reflective, and carefully planned, or that a good manager moves thoughtfully and systematically from planning, to organizing, to coordinating, to controlling, to the other activities on the traditional list of what managers do. As one researcher concluded, “Managers do one darn thing after another!”
Management Is Difficult Because of Its Inherent Paradoxes

The work of managers seems so fragmented, improvisational, and superficial because it embodies a panoply of paradoxes. A paradox is a statement that contains contradictory elements but is true or useful nonetheless. For example: “To focus on the work people do, focus on the people doing the work.” To make sense of this, you must find either the right balance point between the contradictions (focus on work versus focus on people) or the right way to combine them (deal with the work through the people doing it).

We describe here some of the more fundamental and difficult paradoxes that reside at the heart of management. This list is hardly exhaustive, and we’ll point out others as they apply in subsequent chapters.

**Paradox: You Are Responsible for What Others Do**
Performance is the point of it all—the work done by your group. That’s what you’re responsible for. When your boss wants to know why an initiative is in trouble, he won’t call in your whole group. He’ll call you in, and you alone will sit in the hot seat. You’re responsible and no one else. Yet you don’t, or shouldn’t, do the work.

How can anyone be truly responsible for what someone else does? Good question. We say it easily—responsible for the work of others—without appreciating its obvious and inherent difficulty. It makes complete sense only if you assume that in every situation you know what should be done and that people will do exactly what you say. Obviously, those assumptions are flawed, and only when you relinquish them can you understand what a difficult undertaking it is to answer for the work of others. To be successful at it requires that you work through others—that you include and work with them, rather than simply issue directives they must follow—a difficult task for anyone who prefers direct action and personal results.
Paradox: To Focus on the Work, You Must Focus on People Doing the Work

Many managers think they manage the work. They don’t. They’re responsible for the work, but they get work done by influencing the people who do the work. What makes this complicated is what Peter Drucker pointed out: when you hire a hand, it comes with a head and heart attached. So you must pay attention, lots of attention, to the whole person—head and heart—because you need more than your people’s time and attention. Most work now requires knowledge, judgment, thinking, and decision making, and so it matters if people care about what they do. You cannot simply give them orders and criticism. That rarely produces the kind of engagement you need. Other, less direct but more effective forms of influence—such as support, development, and encouragement—are needed that engage the whole person.

Paradox: You Must Both Develop Your People and Evaluate Them

It is a boss’s dual responsibility both to foster the development of her people and to determine if and when those same people must be removed because they cannot do the work. Logically, assessment is necessary for development, but the conflict of the paradox arises when the boss must abandon the goal of development and act solely in the interest of the group by releasing a person who cannot perform the work needed by the group. How do you, as manager, determine when it is time to make that tough choice? How do you work to develop someone and invest yourself in that person’s progress—and then abandon him? How do you find the right balance between someone’s need to learn and their need to perform? It’s as much a psychological as a logical paradox, which makes it all the more difficult. Dealing with the opposing roles of coach and judge will present some of the most difficult emotional and managerial challenges you will face as a boss. You will be sorely tempted to abdicate one of the roles.
Paradox: You Must Make Your Group a Cohesive Team
Without Losing Sight of the Individuals on It

Many managers think the word *team* is simply another name for the group of people they manage. Some eventually realize that success depends on converting the group into a true team—a *group of people who do collective work in committed pursuit of a common goal*. Every team is a group, but not every group is a team. In every team, there’s a strong sense of “we” and a shared belief that “we” succeed or fail together. Yet a team needs to be diverse as well—members must bring different competencies, experiences, mind-sets, and individual interests—if the team is to be innovative. You will struggle constantly to balance the dual needs for diversity and cohesiveness.

Paradox: To Manage Your Group, You Must Manage the Larger Context Beyond Your Group

You may prefer to think you can focus only on your own group. But every group operates in a larger organization or context composed of many groups that depend on each other. Goals, priorities, needs, and interests all differ from group to group because the job of each group differs and resources are scarce. Because you cannot impose what you want on others, or they on you, then to succeed you must constantly manage your group in the context of others’ needs and interests.

To achieve your group’s goals also means there will be times you must influence and even challenge the organization beyond your own area—including your boss, other superiors, colleagues, and outside stakeholders. Too many managers see themselves as subjects of the larger organization who simply follow orders from above. Such thinking is too narrow. To deliver expected results may mean that you sometimes act as change agent both within *and outside* your group. You are responsible for creating the conditions needed for your own success.

Paradox: You Must Focus on Today and Tomorrow

You need results today, but if you don’t prepare today for the future, you won’t get results tomorrow when *tomorrow* becomes
Your 3 Imperatives as a Manager

today. Focusing on today and tomorrow requires trade-offs because limited resources will prevent you from focusing on both at once. But when does one take precedence?

**Paradox: You Must Execute and Innovate**

To survive and succeed, all groups must simultaneously change in some ways and remain the same in others. They must execute and innovate, stay the course and foster change. Yet the group skills and mind-sets required for serious change and innovation differ from those for continuity and steady execution. To do both demands an accomplished manager who can act as both change agent and steward of continuity. Your task is to discern when one versus the other is required.

Much business thinking tends to distinguish management and leadership. It says management focuses on doing work on time, on budget, and on target—steady execution—while leadership focuses on change and innovation. A few years ago, management was the broader term and included leadership. In *Being the Boss* we return to that approach. We believe leading and managing are equally essential and actually work together. In any case, the same person—you, the boss—must do both, and so we employ the term manage to mean all effort necessary to influence others in ways that make them more productive, including both execution and innovation, continuity and change, management and leadership.

**Paradox: You Must Sometimes Do Harm in Order to Do a Greater Good**

With managerial influence and authority comes the ability, often the necessity, to make choices for the greater good that harm some of the individuals or groups involved—for example, when you must cut costs, lay people off, or promote only one of three candidates. Such harms are not the goal but the consequence of actions you must take, yet they are real and painful to those who suffer them.

As a manager, you cannot avoid decisions that affect the work and lives of others in profound ways. They appear all the time, a burden of being the boss. What makes them truly difficult is that
you must weigh competing considerations that render your choices anything but clear and obvious. “Nothing is black and white,” one new manager observed. “It’s all gray. My job is to manage trade-offs.”

If you don’t see such ethical dilemmas as part of the job, you’re likely to treat them as exceptions, distractions that don’t deserve real attention. But they’re not exceptions. They’re built into your everyday work as boss.

Since you cannot avoid ethical dilemmas, you must be prepared for the personal anguish they can create. You probably don’t see yourself as someone who consciously harms others, and so confronting the necessity of inflicting harm, however inadvertently, will force you to examine your identity and think hard about what you’re willing and not willing to do. To these dilemmas you must bring both emotional competence and a set of personal values developed over time through experience—an other reason becoming a boss is a long and difficult journey.

The Paradoxes Define the Fundamental Nature of Management

Remember the paradoxes. You will encounter them every day in almost everything you do as the boss.

They are never fully and truly resolved. That’s why a certain amount of fragmentation, conflict, tension, instability, and general messiness is built into the basic nature of managerial work. Only those who ignore the paradoxes think “good” management will produce a workplace of constant calm cooperation, a perpetually smooth-running machine.

Because of them, the “right” management action will always be a matter of judgment. Be bold or patient, directive or accommodating, developmental or judgmental? These and a thousand other choices will depend on a full consideration of the context and the goals being sought. And it’s not just knowing what to do but how to do it as well. Mastery requires judgment.
The paradoxes explain why management is so stressful. Even successful managers report feelings of overload, conflict, ambiguity, and isolation. The paradoxes are a key reason. They come at you relentlessly—day after day after day. You must find the proper weight for each and keep them all in balance simultaneously as conditions change around you.

The paradoxes explain why the world needs management. Without it, they will eventually undermine the ability of groups to do productive work. They are the primary reason organizations fail and groups fall apart.

The paradoxes explain why becoming a manager requires a lengthy, difficult, personal journey. You will need time and experience to learn how to cope effectively with all of these conflicting interests, forces, and needs at the heart of management.

The paradoxes explain why management requires self-knowledge. Every time you encounter a paradox, you will bring to it a predisposition to favor one side or the other. For example, you tend to focus on the individual over the team—or vice versa. Or you focus on the work and not the people—or vice versa. To each paradox, you apply a default response. Taken together, these predispositions or default responses make up your style, the way you tend to lead as a boss.

What are your default responses? If you’re not aware of them, you will follow them without thinking rather than make choices best suited to the circumstances.

What’s Your Leadership Style?

Mark where you fall on each of the following scales to identify your style profile:

Do you tend to include others in the way you manage, or do you tend to give directions and tell others what to do?

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<tr>
<td>Give directions</td>
<td>Include others</td>
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Do you tend to focus on the work or on the people doing the work? In other words, do you tend to confront and criticize, or do you support people and give them what they need to do good work?

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<td>Focus on work and confrontation</td>
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Do you tend to focus more on evaluating your people or on developing them—on their performance or on helping them learn?

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<td>I tend to judge and evaluate people</td>
<td>I tend to develop people</td>
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Do you tend to focus on your team as a whole or on the individual members who work for you?

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<td>Mostly on members</td>
<td>Mostly on team as a whole</td>
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Do you tend to focus on your team or on the broader organization in which it operates?

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<td>Focus on team</td>
<td>Focus on organization outside team</td>
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Do you tend to focus on today's challenges, or do you prefer to deal with the future and what's coming?

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<td>I stick pretty much to &quot;now&quot;</td>
<td>I prefer planning and thinking about the future</td>
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Your 3 Imperatives as a Manager

Do you prefer execution—getting steady work done—or innovating new things and ways of working?

1 2 3 4 5
I prefer execution
I prefer innovation

Are you reluctant to do anything that might harm someone or some group? Or are you able to cause some pain to some people to accomplish a greater good?

1 2 3 4 5
I avoid any kind of harm or pain to anyone
I can pursue a greater good even if it causes some harm to someone

There are no “right” answers that always and everywhere apply. The right choice will in every case depend on the situation and the people involved. But you need to know what you prefer to do, what response you will make automatically unless you stop and think about what you’re doing. These preferences arise from your personality, your values, and your work experiences. And so, as you’ll discover, they’re not easy to change. The goal is to manage them by being aware of them and sensitive to when they come into play.

Keep your preferences and your style in mind through the rest of Being the Boss. They are your preferred ways of managing, and you’ll find they shape everything you do and every choice you make.

Add to the Paradoxes a Dynamic Workplace and a Changing Workforce

As if the paradoxes aren’t enough, the workplace and the workforce are constantly changing and making your job as manager increasingly difficult. You’re being called upon to assume rising levels of responsibility, manage increasing numbers of people, respond to more change, and cope with mounting diversity.
Globalization and technological change, and the heightened competition they bring, are forcing organizations to become ever more agile and responsive. As a consequence, organizations have become flatter, more far-flung, and hence more multicultural, as well as more complex and fluid in their structure.

Many companies have stopped using organization charts. Reporting relationships change frequently, and many organizations now depend on ad hoc work groups—teams, task forces, boards, and councils—that cross functional, geographical, and hierarchical lines. Such changing complexity has led many companies to give up trying to describe their structure with simple lines and boxes.

While organizations are changing the way they function, the workforce itself is shifting too. Employees of different generations—there are now four in the workplace—bring to work diverse aspirations, motivations, values, and feelings about authority and organizations. Imagine the challenges of managing a collection of workers ranging from twenty to sixty-five years old. That's not an unusual work group today.

In addition, as organizations spread around the globe, their workforces embrace multiple cultures. As a result, there's growing similarity among cultures in the way people dress, talk, and interact socially. Yet these superficial similarities often mask fundamental differences in attitudes about such key work matters as time, deadlines, hierarchy and authority, how to manage conflict, and even how to communicate.

To complicate matters, such diverse group members are often located around the globe, and so relationships among them must be created and maintained through technology rather than face-to-face.

The management implications of more fluid organizations and more diverse employees are both obvious and subtle. What's obvious is that managers must learn to produce results in spite of constant change, ever-growing complexity, as well as basic and often unspoken differences within their groups driven by culture and generation and mediated by new technology-driven ways of
interacting. Running a multifunctional, multicultural, multi-
generational team of thirty people with different training and experience, and spread over three continents, can be someone’s first job as a boss.

At a more subtle level, managers must now work with a changing psychological contract. This is the unspoken agreement that employee and employer bring to their relationship. It’s what each party expects from the other in such areas as rewards, recognition, amount and quality of work, and loyalty.

Today’s contract is increasingly temporary and transactional. Work relationships now tend to focus not on building long-term relationships but on pay-for-work, and both sides recognize work ties will last only as long as they make short-term sense for all involved. We see this in the proliferation of different work arrangements. Besides permanent full-time employees—once the vast majority—the proportion of part-time, job-sharing, freelance, and independent consultant/contractor “employees” is growing dramatically.

Here’s the challenge presented by this shifting psychological contract. How do you manage a multifaceted and transient workforce that feels little personal investment in the long-term success of your organization? How do you create in your people a sense of real commitment to the work? Why should they care? What will cause them to invest the extraordinary effort that good results usually require? This burden now falls largely on your shoulders; you represent the company for those reporting to you. The old saying that “People go to work for a company but quit a boss” is probably more true today than ever.

This is an urgent problem for you and your organization. Low birthrates, an aging workforce, and other factors are shrinking the labor force in developed economies. And with growing educational and economic opportunities in emerging economies, the aspirations and expectations of the labor force there are on the rise. As a result, only good bosses, supported by well-run organizations, will be able to hold good people.
How Do You Manage in Such a World?

As all those changes make management even more fluid, hectic, fragmented, and discontinuous, how can you, as a boss, do anything but react to what comes at you day by day? How can you get beyond merely coping with the chaos? Unfortunately, many managers don’t. We know that too many have no sense of where they’re going and simply react to events as best they can.12

But effective managers do more than cope. They use the apparent chaos to do their work as managers.13 They resolve problems by referring to some sense of the future they’re trying to create, rather than arranging endless ad hoc solutions. If they need information, they use a chance encounter to ask a key question. Indeed, a ten-minute meeting on one subject may end up covering four or five topics because the manager deliberately uses the opportunity to raise them. In short, effective managers bend each interruption and problem to achieve a managerial end. They find in every activity thrust on them a seed of progress.

The Manager’s 3 Imperatives

To apply this approach, you need a clear underlying sense of what’s important, where you and your group want to be in the future, the priorities that spring from that foresight, and how you will achieve your goals. You need a mental framework that you can lay over the chaos and into which you can fit all the messy pieces as they come at you. For that, you need a way of thinking about your work and, in particular, a way of thinking about what you must do to influence your people to make them productive and achieve the results you need.

We offer a way based on studies of management practice—what effective managers actually do—and on our knowledge of where managers tend to go wrong.

We call this approach the effective manager’s 3 Imperatives: manage yourself, manage your network, manage your team. We believe it can be used to guide every aspect of your work. Each imperative is critical to your success, and, taken together,
they encompass the crucial activities all effective managers must do to influence others. Mastering them is the purpose of your journey.

**Manage yourself.** Many managers, new and experienced, think the third imperative, manage your team, covers the whole of their work. It’s not obvious to them that effective management begins with them as individuals. Thus, *manage yourself* deals with changes required in how you think about yourself and your role, how you relate to others as a boss, and especially how you try to influence others.

**Manage your network.** Many managers disdain and actively avoid the political side of organizations. Others relish the internal competition and focus on it so much that winning organizational battles becomes their primary goal, the source of satisfaction for them. Both kinds of manager fail to appreciate the need to work effectively in political environments without becoming enmeshed in or controlled by them. Instead of the fly caught in the web, you must become the spider that creates the web—your own network—and dances lightly over it.

**Manage your team.** This is about managing all those in your group for whom you’re responsible. In managing their own people, however, many managers never grasp the critical difference between simply managing a collection of individuals and managing a real team. *Manage your team* is about building a high-performance team that’s more than the sum of the individuals involved.

The 3 Imperatives summarize the essence of what you must do to fulfill your responsibility as a manager. They are the fundamental levers of influence you can use with both the people who work for you and those who don’t. They provide the tools for managing the paradoxes, and they’re flexible enough to accommodate the changes now occurring in the workplace and the workforce.
Above all, the 3 Imperatives make sense of your journey by making clear its purpose: to become an effective manager by mastering them. Mastery means not perfection but the ability to perform the 3 Imperatives with a consistently high level of proficiency. Each imperative reveals not only how to manage well but also how you must change if you want to act, think, and feel like a manager. Each is a key piece of the transformation management requires.

The remainder of Being the Boss is organized around the 3 Imperatives, with three or four chapters devoted to each.

Part I, Manage Yourself, focuses on the person-to-person relationships you form with others, especially those who work for you—which are the basis for how you influence others. Chapter 2 deals with the limited role of formal authority as an enduring and effective source of influence. Chapter 3 looks at the pitfalls of using friendship to influence others. And chapter 4 examines the real foundation of influence: trust.

Part II, Manage Your Network, is about exercising influence with integrity and for constructive purposes, given the political realities of organizational life. Chapter 5 stresses the critical need for you to create and sustain, with careful deliberation, a network of groups and people you must work with and whose help you need. Chapter 6 describes in detail how to build such a network. And chapter 7 examines your critical relationship with your boss.

Part III, Manage Your Team, focuses on what’s required to create a real team of those who work for you. Chapter 8 deals with the need for you to make both written and unwritten plans to guide your team and give it a sense of purpose. Chapter 9 describes team culture and how to foster the right norms, values, and standards for productive teamwork. Chapter 10 explains how to work with and manage the performance of individual team members. And chapter 11 reveals the fundamental action model—prep-do-review—at the heart of all you do as a boss and how it can help you use every management activity, including problems and unexpected events, to pursue your managerial agenda.
Finally, chapter 12 will help you assess yourself against the 3 Imperatives and determine your strengths and where you need to make more progress in your journey. It also provides helpful advice for learning from your day-to-day experience.

As you read through *Being the Boss*, you’ll discover a consistent theme: the critical role of self-assessment. What’s covered in these chapters is based on management research and our extensive experience both managing others and helping others learn how to be effective bosses. Instead of theory, we provide how-to prescriptions through a process of self-discovery. The bottom line—becoming an effective boss—is about knowing how to use yourself as an instrument to get work done and contribute to your organization. Throughout, you will be encouraged to examine yourself in light of each imperative and, through a series of headings and subheadings that are actually probing questions, assess yourself against its requirements.

If you’re an experienced manager who’s already made much progress on your journey, you’ll be familiar already with some of the questions and material in *Being the Boss*. Nonetheless, it will be useful as a reminder and summary, a way to identify where you still need to make progress, because there’s often a gap between what we know to do and what we actually do. Also, as work and circumstances change, your job can temporarily call on some aspects of the 3 Imperatives more than others, and so it’s good practice periodically to take a comprehensive look at yourself and where you stand.

Whether you are experienced or new to management, assess yourself with care and thought. Your success will depend on your ability to make progress, and progress depends on a clear sense of your current strengths and weaknesses. Over and over, we find managers at all levels who underperform, and whose careers are stalled or derailed, because they have not mastered the imperatives.

We hope you emerge from *Being the Boss* with a richer sense of yourself as a manager and a commitment to moving ahead on your journey. If you aspire to greater responsibility and impact, continuing progress on your journey will provide them. With commitment, there’s no limit to where your journey can take you.
Chapter 1


THE ANSWERS YOU NEED, WHEN YOU NEED THEM

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