

THE BOSS BENCHMARK

35 ways you can finally reach it

“ *It's impressive. Pithy. Funny. On target... a great rev up – everyone'll buy one for their boss!!!* ”

Kevin Roberts, Worldwide CEO, Saatchi & Saatchi



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"Allison it's impressive. Pithy. Funny. On target... a great rev up - everyone'll buy one for their boss!!!" (He ordered 45 copies for his international senior management team.)

Kevin Roberts, Worldwide CEO, Saatchi & Saatchi

"Almost every client I work with wants to work for a boss who sets clear goals, gives meaningful feedback, and lets workers get on with their jobs. This book is a helpful reminder that most problems of motivation and talent retention can only be addressed by making better managers. It improves self-awareness and shows you how to make a real impact in the workplace - I recommend it."

John Lees, author of "How To Get A Job You'll Love"

"If you want success in management then this blueprint will be invaluable."

Carey Smith, CEO, Ray White Real Estate

"I found the book to be refreshing and very clear in its message."

Martyn Dawson, Group General Manager, Armstrong Motor Group

"Just flicking through it I was impressed, you have it pitched at an affordable price for the content."

Sarah Strong, Learning Plus Manager, Bay of Plenty District Health Board

"I like the book a lot! It's very user friendly and ideal as a quick reference guide to use on an ongoing basis; opposed to wading through a novel, getting good ideas and immediately forgetting them, or not putting them into practice as yet another title collects dust on a shelf."

Jonathon Taylor, Editor, Academy Publishing

"A useful collation of tips to understand your workplace better."

Peter Townsend, CEO, Canterbury Employers' Chamber of Commerce

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introduction

As the boss you influence the happiness and energy of your team whether you like it or not. What “being the boss” means is something you should ponder **daily**. After a while though, you can get stuck in a rut forgetting that you should be **constantly growing** and becoming better at it than you were yesterday. With so much to do everyday, it can be hard to always be an amazing boss in every single way.

One of the reasons we are not the bosses we could be is because many of us are in positions of responsibility by being promoted there. But a new job title and a pay rise is the only visible change – the appropriate attitude and behavioural changes are not always made. Sadly, no amount of attendance at “time management” courses can prepare a person for the responsibility of building and nurturing an energizing culture, developing others, and helping them find fulfillment. Being a great boss is about personal style and has nothing to do with qualifications or course certificates.

Despite spending a large proportion of our lives at work, many people are in roles they find unfulfilling. Bosses that have not reached the boss benchmark can shoulder a little of the blame for that. I naively entered the working world at age sixteen and was shocked to find how many people were unhappy at work. I had no idea the working world could be such a dull

continued...

and passionless place. Given the many working years I had ahead of me, I was determined to make sure I fell passionately in love with whatever I chose to do. I made it my mission to improve workplaces and did fall in love with the difference I made surveying staff. I got to show management teams things they could not see on their own. I got to ask workers the questions they were dying to answer, but management did not know they were supposed to ask. I have uncovered serious issues they had no idea existed – let alone impacted the business.

Running my own staff survey company taught me a lot about bosses and employees. I learnt what it takes to be a great boss and which silly mistakes cost businesses greatly. Time and again I have seen it is the basics that managers are getting wrong. Most managers have great intentions, but they are so busy doing “the boss’s work” they forget how to lead. This means they never reach their full potential.

This book reveals the basics and how to get them right. Robbie Deans, rugby legend, ex-Crusaders coach and now coach of the Wallabies, is successful not because of his ability to teach fancy tactics but because he truly practices his favourite saying; “Keep it simple”. His players listen and they deliver year after year after year!

continued...

That is where “The Boss Benchmark” comes in. After putting into practice the 35 lessons in this book, you can forget about constantly losing staff, having underperforming teams, and awkward uncommunicative cultures.

To get the most out of this book I recommend reading the book from start to finish and noting down any of the 35 points that resonate with you. Choose the three or four that you think will have the biggest impact for your team, and focus on those first. Once you have mastered those, you can refer back to your list and choose a few more items that you would like to put into practice. As you read you may find yourself thinking “*ahh that point is relevant to **my** boss*” which is why I highly recommend getting a few of your staff members to read the book and tell you what points **they think** are relevant to you. You will gain even more insight that way rather than just evaluating yourself.

Over time, you will master all 35 points and will find that you also keep delivering year after year. Those who reach The Boss Benchmark will see their employees in a whole new light and watch as they reach their full, exciting potential.

Part one:

*What you need to
prove,*

NOT

just say

i Know What Team Means

When the team is totally snowed under, a cheerful “keep it up” as you pass is not enough of a contribution. Roll up your sleeves and help. Putting your back into it and getting stuck in is much more motivating for workers and sends a message that you really are part of the team too. Bosses who are prepared to do this are frequently mentioned in staff surveys. Workers want you to lend a hand – not be stuck in old fashioned hierarchies where the “workers work and the bosses boss”. Team means **everyone!** It is most obvious during busy periods which workplaces have barriers between the boss and workers. If the boss hesitates to get their hands dirty alongside the workers, it is safe to assume there are other problems that flow from their attitude also.

it really happened

The boss clutched at her steaming hot coffee at the meeting every morning – even more tightly during winter. She stopped every few words to take a sip. It was an unspoken rule that workers were not allowed to find comfort in their own morning coffee –that privilege was only for the boss. Anyone who broke that rule found themselves on the receiving end of “the stare”. This boss is missing an opportunity to get the team feeling snug and relaxed during the meeting. I bet workers would be more focused on what is being said if they had a hot drink in their hand, instead of feeling resentful.

Annual conference time comes around every March – meaning early starts and late finishes. Every year there is a list of “routine jobs” that need doing: name badges, goody bags, seating details...the list goes on. To co-ordinate the team, the boss lists all the names up on the board and allocates jobs to everyone including himself. The job no-one ever wants is the loading and unloading of the gear at the venue. Knowing this, the boss assigns himself that job. The routine work becomes team work.

To Do:

- Think honestly about whether you consider yourself “too good” for some tasks
- Identify any specific times you have avoided getting your hands dirty in the past.
- Think about ways you can pitch in more and how doing so will influence the team.

Fair's Fair

2

“It’s not fair” echoes down the hallway as the child stomps their feet all the way to their bedroom and slams the door. If workers could get away with this at work it would be a frequent occurrence. Instead, they do the next best thing – moan about unfair circumstances to any workmate that will listen. Many bosses are oblivious to things workers consider unfair. Unaddressed, such issues can seriously impact performance and morale. In a workplace with a truly open and honest culture, workers would not need to moan as they would be comfortable speaking up. Where such cultures do not exist yet, it takes a fearless manager with big ears to ask and then tackle the unfairness which is causing tension. Do this and workers will love you for starting to open the airwaves.

Favouritism (including unreasonably comparing individuals or teams) is obviously unfair. Statements like *“Why can’t everyone perform like the X department?”* or *“I wish everyone would just perform like branch Y”* do nothing to motivate the lesser performing teams – it just increases frustration. To figure out exactly why they are not performing at the same level, rather than just telling them to step up, sounds like basic common sense. But in many cases it is only the staff who have figured out that the market conditions and clients for that department are very different. Or they know that the other department is manipulating their statistics. Meanwhile, management remain stuck on the question *“Why aren’t they performing like the X department?”*

it really happened

*B*ecause this worker was “only the junior” she was not welcome at the team meeting, and was excluded while everyone else discussed relevant issues. The junior worker also had to clean things over and over again when there was nothing else to do, whereas senior staff were allowed to sit all day waiting for customers. This worker felt insignificant instead of a positive and treasured part of the team. She would never have been able to progress up the chain and be promoted in this workplace. The only way she could grow professionally was to find new employment where she was considered part of the team and actually invited to team meetings.

*T*he workers used products in their job that earned loyalty prizes. However, these prizes never made it past the workers at the front desk. The front desk were thrilled to sport their new threads and toys. They spared no thought about how they were earned by the workers, or if they should consider sharing them fairly.

*F*avouritism in the army meant that “show ponies” were sent on important missions. Unfortunately for the missions, these show ponies cracked under pressure, were unable to adapt and panicked when things went wrong. Management learnt the hard way about selecting for the right reasons. Choosing the wrong person in the army is high risk – it puts lives in danger. Favouritism should definitely have no place here.

To Do:

- Work with staff to identify things they consider unfair in the workplace.
- Facilitate as a team talk, anonymous survey or suggestion box and brainstorm solutions.
- Identify any cases of favouritism at individual or departmental level. Discuss and address.

i am Grateful

3

Verbal recognition is something workers deeply cherish but seldom receive. It is a costly mistake many bosses unknowingly **keep** making. The great news is that it costs nothing to fix. Perhaps you feel you are good at giving verbal thanks and recognition. But if you think carefully about it, you may find a large percentage of your “great verbalization” is just the thought “*Oh I must remember to thank...*” or “*Boy they did a great job...*” and it actually never comes out of your mouth! That is better, however, than not noticing at all. Verbal recognition is easy and about as basic as you can get – recognise great work and comment on it straightaway. Remember it and even tell others. Mention the great contributions you have seen at a weekly meeting. Ask workers to share anything you missed – people can confess their own fabulous work and thank their co-workers. Verbal recognition always rates high on the list of importance to workers, and when sincere it makes them feel amazing.

it really happened

*The question: “What would make you feel more valued by company X?”
The answer: “If they told me I was.”*

The general manager of a nationwide 90 chain brand was disappointed (and stunned) when the CEO did not speak to him at the annual conference. A brief hello but no encouragement, support, brainstorming or comments over three whole days! The GM has since decided to seek new employment. With his amazing work history in senior management it will not take long for someone to properly utilise and appreciate him. This story shows that it is not just younger workers or those on the coal face who can feel out of the loop and overlooked – but executive level managers too. This GM learnt first hand exactly how it feels to be hideously unimportant – a mistake he is now very sure he will never make with his own staff.

To Do:

- Keep a notebook of great things you see workers doing (you will notice how many opportunities to thank staff you have missed in the past).
- Share your list at the weekly meeting. Allow everyone else to share too – recognizing themselves, fellow workers and yep, if deserved, the boss too!
- Go out of your way to give sincere verbal thanks as soon as you see something amazing done – if you can make it catch on it will totally change the atmosphere and energy around the place.

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What does an **amazing boss** look like?



Ask a staff surveyor who has seen the gory insides of a lot of workplaces! From petty moans to serious workplace crimes *nothing* surprises Allison O'Neill anymore. She heard first hand from loads of workers what they really love (and really loathe) in a boss. She knows *what* it takes for a boss to be truly fabulous and it is not complicated! She shares the secrets of a staff surveyor in “**The Boss Benchmark**”. You will learn 35 ways to reach the benchmark and reinforce them with 55 real life (good and bad!) workplace stories. She lends the “**keep it simple**” mantra of hugely successful ex-Crusaders/now Wallabies coach Robbie Deans. As the stories inside prove bosses need to leave complicated theories behind and urgently get back to basics.

Learn what your workers have been trying to teach you for years:

- What small stuff you **do** need to sweat
- How being **off task** gets more work done
- What big mistake you **keep** making (it costs nothing to fix)
- How the yucky stuff is a huge **blessing**
- What cricket teaches us about being **contagious** at work
- Why workers **want** you to get all philosophical on them
- The team **'skill stock take'** you will wish you did 20 years ago
- What stops your workers performing as well as they **know** they can

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