

Hello, this is Wayne Rivers at FBI, and We Build Better Contractors.

This week I want to talk about how to determine if you're a bad boss. None of us think we're bad bosses, but if you think about the arc of your career, most of us had to master technical things before we became managers, leaders, and bosses. So we were good plumbers, or we were good engineers, or we were good estimator or something, and you come up through the ranks and one day you find yourself not just doing tasks, but also managing and leading people. So, we don't get much training on how to be a good boss. We get plenty of training on the technical aspects of our companies and what we do, but not much on how to be a good boss. So how do you know if you're a bad boss? What are the signals?

So, this comes from an article from a Fast Company magazine in July of 2021. And great start to the article. And it said that everybody right now is talking about how hard it is to find good employees, but how hard is it to find good bosses. That's a fair question. What about this is important to you? Well golly, none of us intentionally wants to be a bad boss. It's just that we do certain things sometimes without thinking, and we fall into patterns that may not be productive sometimes. We all should be working to get better all the time out. You could be the best boss in your state. Why not aspire to be the best boss in the country or the world? Why not try to get better? Take the lessons of Tom Brady or Tiger Woods, whoever, they're always trying to get better.

So, in this blog we'll offer six diagnostics and then four tools you can use to improve as a boss. So, the old adage is that people don't leave their jobs, they leave their bosses. And I would say that's probably true. Mike Flentje says that, and I think it's true. So how do you know if you're a bad boss? So, six tests, self-tests that you can do to see if you're a bad boss. Do your people walk on eggshells? Do they avoid you? When you walk down the hall, do you see the backs of people going in the other direction? Do people avoid eye contact with you? That's a key tell. Are they reluctant to engage? Do they avoid or they show up late for meetings? Do they avoid? If you get the sense that your people are walking on eggshells around you, that's an indicator that something isn't right, and people are uncomfortable around you, and it's important to know that.

Turnover. Holy moly, if you've got turnover in your organization, you may not be a bad boss, but you may have bad bosses working for you, working with you, and obviously it's running people away from the organization. Test who gets credit. I remember hearing a basketball coach, I can't remember which one it was, but anytime there was a problem, anytime there was a loss, the loss was the coach's fault. He took responsibility for the loss. Whenever there was a victory, the credit went to the players. So, in the context of business, when you have victories, the credit should go to your people. You should call out your people, give them the accolades, give them the attaboys, that kind of thing. When there's a problem, the problem should rest with you. What's the old saying, the captain goes down with the ship. It's your responsibility to make things go right, and it's also your responsibility to accept things when they go wrong.

Gosh. Do you do bed checks? Are you testing your people? Are you the kind of boss that calls at four o'clock on a Friday just to make sure people are still in the office working? Do you not trust your people? Do you test them? Do you go around at 8:00 in the morning to make sure everybody's at their desks and anybody that comes in at 8:10, you're, "What's going on?" That kind of stuff? That is bad boss. That's micromanaging the patriarchal behavior from right out of the 1950s. Do you find yourself doing things yourself because you don't trust your people to do them? What's the old saying, if you want something done right you got to do it yourself? Well, that is no way to lead. That is no way to manage in today's world. So, if you find yourself DIY, then that's probably an indicator.

And then finally, do you focus on rules and compliance? So, you think, "Hmm, what should my employees stop doing? So-and-so took 15 extra minutes at lunch. We've got to stop that because that's 15 minutes of lost productivity for the company." Don't focus on rules and compliance, focus on how you can help your employees. Maybe there's a sick child at home and the 15 minutes is quite necessary. You've got to be compassionate in today's world and understand that, golly,

people get caught in traffic, they get flat tires, they get sick, their families get all kinds of things. People have a life outside of the business. How can you find a way to give them stuff to help them do that jobs better? Not a narrow focus on compliance.

Okay, now the four tools. Okay. How do you get better? If you think you might be a bad boss, how do you get better? Well, the first thing is easy. Read, search online, get articles about what it is to be a good boss versus what it is to be a bad boss. Educate yourself. The second thing is measure turnover. That's a key indicator. Now some turnover is good. There are some employees you'd rather not have, and if they decide to leave for whatever reason, that's not so bad. On the other hand, if you're losing your talented people, that indicates something's wrong and you need to address it right away. The third thing. Undertake some assessment. EQ type instruments, 360-degree evaluations. I mean, get some feedback from a third-party professional that can administer some of these instruments, and let's just assess, let's really put it to the test. Are you a good or a bad boss?

And finally, my preferred method is engage with your peers. If you're not in a peer group, if you don't have the confidence to be in a peer group with other people in your industry, that probably tells you something right there about whether or not you're a good boss. Good bosses want to learn, they want feedback, they want engagement, they want to get better. They never ever want to stop getting better. If you're a little bit reluctant to engage in some kind of evaluation or peer groups or whatever, that might tell you something right there. So I'd like to hear what you're doing to improve yourself as a boss, to improve yourself as a leader, and maybe even from some of you, what was the tipping point when you realized that, "Golly, I really could do better, so I'm going to do X, Y, and Z." I'd like to hear that.

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