

How to manage your boss

Work towards a win-win working relationship

UNLESS — or until — you are the CEO, you and everyone else in an organisation, will have a boss. And if you are to survive and thrive in your career, then you must work with your boss, however difficult that might be.

Bosses can be from hell. If their most positive comment is to say: "When I want your opinion, I'll give it to you," and if the best thing you can say about them is that their indecision is final, then maybe you should work for someone else.

Assuming things are not that bad, then your job is not to do as you are told and keep your head down. It is to work towards a situation where the relationship and way of working between the two of you benefits both — and to do so actively.

Like so much about work and success, good working relationships with the boss, colleagues or other senior people do not just happen. The chal-

lenge is to relate well to everyone in this senior category.

It is up to you to make that happen. So, let us assume you want to work with your boss and not walk away. In this case you must:

- Take a constructive view of the relationship — see it as something that can potentially help you do a good job and meet specific job objectives
- Take a longer-term view, and look at how a good relationship can help you develop your job and career, and move towards targets you set yourself for your personal career development and success.

You should not assume that the process of creating an effective relationship is easy or can be done overnight.

As with so much else about work and the workplace, success

is in the details. But there are principles that act to move you in the right direction.

Without a doubt, a good boss is a real asset both in getting the current job done and in terms of your career. You do not succeed

just by working for a boss, though getting your tasks done well is certainly important to how they see you; you must also work with your boss. Two heads often are better than one.

Certainly bosses cannot usually succeed unaided. That is what a team is for. The team has to utilise the resources available in order to maximise productivity, effectiveness and accomplish whatever it is that must be achieved ultimately.

You are an asset to them and, when it is constructive, working together benefits both of you.

If you make them take you seriously, give you a chance, trust you and if their confidence is repaid by results, then the relationship will work. At best it will keep the boss happy and allow you to blossom — and get the job well done too.

You must actively think about how you can work to create the kind of boss you want. Indeed, you would need to know how to relate to and work with any key and senior people you do not control. And, if it seems that the process is likely to be a little like walking on water, you must find the stepping stones that will make it easier to achieve.

Patrick Forsyth is a management consultant, trainer and commentator on business issues. He is the author of Manage Your Boss, published by Marshall Cavendish and available in major bookstores.

A guest columnist alternates with John Bittleston in this space.

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QUIZTIME

Q: Your article last week made me think that a good boss or leader is born and not made. As a young manager, I'm keen to know more.

You said that a good boss should be strong, open and brave. Are there set traits a person must have in order to be a good boss? For every gentle, listening and non-confrontational boss, we can also find examples of powerful leaders who rule by fear rather than respect. And often, they have the results to justify their means. So, is it not a matter of choice what type of manager I choose to be? — Patrick

John Bittleston replies:

People are born with certain talent, personality characteristics and chemical balances, which are often important in deciding their behaviour. I do not, however, believe that any personality is so formed that it cannot be modified.

Tests prove that careful handling of the stick and the carrot work wonders. For this reason I do not think that the bad boss is inherently bad. He can change his behaviour. Why so? Because I had an appalling childhood and grew up very love-deprived. I welcomed anyone as a friend. The result was that I fell in with some undesirable characters during my youth. Initially, I was a very bad boss.

I was fortunate to have four excellent mentors in my life. I was also fortunate to have a will to learn. The process has been a long one. You can ask anyone who has worked for me in the last 30 years if I am a good boss. They will all say yes.

Powerful and ruthless leaders do get results — if, by results you mean only profits. I look at work and life more holistically than that. A firing squad gets results. Kalashnikovs are not, however, a recommended method of control since they escalate violent confrontation, destroy understanding and ruin societies. They also demonstrate the weakness of the person ordering their use.

It is certainly a matter of choice what sort of boss you want to be. That is why we were given free will — the greatest gift man has.

Before you chose your style of management, however, you may want to do the Mirror Test, which will help you find out who you are.

John Bittleston, our regular columnist who mentors people in business, career and personal matters, is our expert for the week. Find out more about the Mirror Test and what he can do for you on www.TerrificMentor.com

BRAINFOOD

Succeed in Your Own Terms
Herb Greenberg, Patrick Sweeney



SUCCESS in life, as they say, is not handed to you on a platter.

Rather, it's how much you crave it and what you're willing to do to achieve your intended goals. Sure, we may need some hand-holding here and a little nudge there to point us in the right direction. That's where this new book, *Succeed on Your Own Terms*, comes in handy.

Co-authors Herb Greenberg and Patrick Sweeney certainly left no stone unturned in their quest to uncover the secrets to what makes the top achievers in the world successful.

The two authors spent the better part of two years travelling to 24 countries as part of their research, where they personally met and interviewed scores of real-

life success stories.

Read about the inspirational story of Mr Joao Carlos Marins, who lost the use of one of his hands in an accident but still went on to perform a Bach recital at the famous Carnegie Hall. Even Greenberg himself has a remarkable story to tell, having earned his doctorate in psychology despite losing his sight when he was just 10 years old.

One other highlight of the book is the chance to take the unique Caliper personality test, which has already been used by more than 25,000 corporate clients to assess over two million employees.

This book is ideal for those who want to discover their inner success as well as managers who want to surround themselves with like-minded people who are driven to succeed.

— LEE U-WEN

Succeed on Your Own Terms is available at Borders Singapore for \$41.95.

noticeboard

BE A BETTER BUSINESS WRITER

What are some of the most commonly confused words in the business world today? Do you know what is proper email etiquette?

This one-day workshop organised by LCI Executive Seminars could have the answers. Join trainer Shirley Taylor as she shows you some practical tools and techniques of correspondence. Learn how to organise your thoughts on paper, structure your message logically and improve all aspects of your written communication.

What: Power up your Business Writing Skills
When: Oct 11-12, 9am to 5pm
Where: Le Meridien Hotel
Cost: \$675 per person
Contact: 6376 2018 or email sam@lciseminars.com.

UWC SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATIONS NOW OPEN

The United World Colleges (UWC) is offering four scholarships for students to pursue the International Baccalaureate diploma at its colleges in Italy, Norway, Wales, New Mexico and Canada.

The scholarships are recognised by the Ministry of Education and applications close on Oct 23.

For more information, visit www.uwc.org, call Natalie Lam at 9647 9160, or email uwcsingapore@gmail.com

ASIA'S FIRST PROFESSIONAL WINE COURSE FOR WINE IMPORTERS

Fancy progressing from self-professed wine connoisseur to making a business venture out of it?

Wine for Asia 2006 and Singapore Polytechnic is putting together a new certificate course in international wine import next month. Billed as the first of its kind in Asia, the five-day course will feature classroom learning and "vineyard tours" at the Wine for Asia exhibition at the Singapore Expo.

Learn about wine trends, how to select the best wines and marketing strategies to better manage your wine business. A 50-percent course fee subsidy will be given to the first 50 applicants.

What: Certificate of Performance in International Wine Import
When: Oct 31 — Nov 4
Where: Singapore Polytechnic and Singapore Expo
Cost: \$600 per person
Contact: Call 6396 6695 or 6396 6795, or visit www.sp.edu.sg and www.wineforasia.com

THE FINER POINTS OF TEA

Designing a career

Design school teaches aspiring designers how to succeed in the industry

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SINGAPORE'S design industry may be over 30 years old, but its failure to churn out a regular stream of talented designers could stunt the growth of what is already a middle-aged baby for many years to come.

That is the view of Mr Mark Phooi, the principal of the First International Design School (FIDS), who says one perpetual setback is the fact that a career in design is typically seen as "a choice of need, rather than passion".

The 44-year-old has several reasons why design still remains unpopular among students, despite the recent push for the creative industries by the Government.

"The creative and design streaks among Singaporeans are relatively low, coupled with the low regard and unknown career path for the industry. These are the two greatest stumbling blocks which must be overcome in order for design to be favourable," he told TODAY in a recent interview.

The local industry is also a niche one, he added. And with the domestic market being relatively small, many are shying away from an industry where the demand for talented designs is a constant one.

"The cost of employment (for local graduates) is also higher compared to foreigners, especially those from the Philippines, who are cheaper (to hire)," he said.

Design talent in Singapore is scarce partly because the industry itself hasn't matured fully to appreciate fine design, he added.

On his part, Mr Phooi and his team of instructors at FiDS plan to go all out to groom aspiring designer-entrepreneurs with the managerial know-how to set up their own design firms in future.

Formed last year, FiDS is the brain-

child of Singapore's largest communications enterprise, the First Media Group of Companies, and a merger between Coleman Creative Design School and the Inspiration Design School. It is the only design school here that is managed and owned by professional designers.

Today, some 150 students — nearly half are foreigners from countries like China and Indonesia — are pursuing diplomas and degrees conferred by Blackburn College in the United Kingdom and Charles Stuart University in Australia.

Mr Phooi, who is also founder and group chief executive officer of First Media, said FiDS is different from other design schools in Singapore as it offers career starters and career switchers the break to go from mere practitioner to business-owner.

The school's unique curriculum, he added, not only trains students with the latest in design skills but also offers them gateways to the industry through internships with design studios both at home and abroad.

Mr Phooi himself has groomed over 20 award-winning design studio owners, having first fallen in love with graphic design while studying for a Diploma in Applied Arts at the Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts. He was also recently short listed as one of the finalists for last Friday's Entrepreneur of the Year Award.

His advice to students about to venture into the creative world of design: Realise your dreams, keep practising and be resourceful at all times.

"Practical skills alone are not enough to guarantee one's success in this competitive environment. We teach our students how to fish and that's the hallmark of our contribution in nurturing a more vibrant, entrepreneurial culture in Singapore."

Do you have a question about a career in design? Email your questions to Mr Mark Phooi (succeed@newstoday.com.sg) and he will guide you along in next Monday's Quiz Time slot.



PHOTO COURTESY OF FIDS
GROOMING TALENT: Mr Mark Phooi, principal of First International Design School.

dean's list
Mark Phooi

CEO101

Loyalty is dead in the workplace. Agree?

MR RAY BIGGER, CEO OF THE BRITISH CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AND FOUNDER AND MANAGING DIRECTOR OF THINK8 REPLIES: "When a Gallop survey reveals that only six per cent of employees are actively engaged, the workplace unquestionably has 'loyalty issues'. The solution lies in great management who can recruit the right people and play on their strengths. Making these employees feel valued is of utmost importance and not just through their pay packet — draw inspiration from the recent news story of the company that pays for pregnant employees' taxi fares. Communication is vital — employees must understand clearly their role and responsibilities, and be asked to contribute ideas. Remember, everyone makes mistakes — ensure they learn from them and address concerns with coaching."

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