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Read on to find out ...

Are you a great boss?

By Mary Kelly

Many employees commonly leave work complaining about their jobs. But there are also vast numbers of very happy employees who say they like their bosses and would, in fact, be downright unhappy if they had to work for someone else.

Do your employees love you? Or at least like working for you? A recent survey across a variety of professions yielded some interesting insights. The employees who conveyed sincere fondness for the people they work for claimed their bosses possess certain traits that made it a pleasure for the employees to come to work everyday. We were able to classify the hundreds of responses into four specific categories; communication, actions, knowledge and empathy.

Communication

In any organization, it seems the No. 1 issue is communication. It is hard to provide clear direction, present timely feedback on performance, properly motivate, listen carefully and garner support while trying to juggle everything else. But fabulous communication by the boss was high on the list of employees who like coming to work.

>> Employees overwhelmingly appreciate the times when their boss asks their opinions, and actually takes those opinions into consideration.

>> Employees felt valued when the person in charge explained why decisions were made and what the decision-making factors were in play. Employees liked knowing the decision-making process because they said it allowed them to learn their own jobs better. They believed they could develop into more productive employees by knowing how the boss thinks and the way the company conducted business.

>> Workers also liked managers who appeared genuinely interested in the employees' ideas and suggestions. When the bosses showed further interest by asking for more information, employees felt they were valued by the organization.

>> Employees perceive that the people in charge are somehow above some of the more mundane issues that bother more junior personnel. Employees liked that managers were focused on larger, more strategic issues instead of the daily routine tasks.

>> Employees expressed gratitude when their bosses did not complain around the junior employees. Good bosses were credited with being positive and upbeat.

>> The communication trait employees most liked about their bosses was when the boss gave the employee credit for doing a good job or recognized them for accomplishing a specific task.

Action

We've heard that actions speak louder than words. Terrific bosses communicate well and reiterate those words with the behavior to back them up. They show the workplace that they mean what they say by their actions.

>> Great managers make sure that employees know and understand their jobs by making sure the employees have the right training.

>> Happy employees say they know their boss stands by them when things get difficult. One person said, "I never really knew what my boss thought of me until someone else overheard him stick up for me to his boss. He doesn't know I know, but I thought that was great of him."

>> Good leaders get out in the workspaces to make sure employees have the right resources needed to do their jobs well.

>> A few workers applauded their boss for eliminating needless tasks. One worker said that his boss minimized time-wasting Excel spreadsheets, and eliminated repetitive and detailed PowerPoint briefs when possible.

>> Managers who acted quickly on deadlines and planned ahead so employees were not scrambling at the last minute got high marks, even though most employees understood that eleventh-hour jobs do occasionally happen. Employees say they recognized the managers' efforts to strategically plan to preclude those frantic moments. This ultimately makes the employees' jobs easier and more manageable.

>> Fairness in the workplace was frequently cited. Firm, but fair, is admired.

>> The action (or inaction) employees enjoyed on a daily basis was to not be nagged. Not ignored, and not neglected, but left alone and trusted to perform their duties. No one wanted a boss who hovers over them. "I don't feel micro-managed" was a credit to the bosses' managerial abilities.

>> A cash bonus or a promotion for hard work was, not surprisingly, repeatedly mentioned and served to inspire loyalty toward both the boss and the organization.

Knowledge

The boss has to know the job. It is great when the boss offers intelligent instructions, provides positive and constructive feedback while promoting, and recognizes those who deserve it. Smart bosses also seem to promote confidence among their employees. Not every leader realizes that part of his or her job is to be a teacher; but the truly fabulous bosses show greatness through sharing what they know, and by helping the individuals who work for them learn the business.

>> Employees say they don't want nor need the boss to know every detail of their job, but like the fact that the boss is available for inspiration, guidance, and an overall feel for the task at hand.

>> Employees expressed that the best managers are approachable and capable of providing sound decisions based on accurate information.

>> When a boss assists an employee in the learning process, employees feel they are being helped to succeed. They perceive that the boss is looking after their best interests.

Empathy

By now all the managers who are still reading this are thinking they need to be a Super Hero to succeed in the workplace. Communicate well, walk the talk, and be brilliant. It sounds daunting. Do managers have to perfect in everything? No, not perfect. The other important trait employees crave is empathy for the employees' competing family, work and other interests.

>> Bosses who were flexible with competing priorities were highly prized. Employees claimed they would rather work for someone who was receptive to flexible working hours than one who was correct all the time.

>> Employees applauded it when leaders occasionally admitted their mistakes. They felt it made it easier for the boss to understand imperfections. Employees claim they feel bad enough about occasional errors when they occur, but when the boss seemed to understand and doesn't get overly excited about the mistake, it actually makes the employee try harder and not repeat them.

>> The bosses that stand out also understand personal life outside of work, such as family, school and the personal goals of each individual. Managers who allowed for maximum flexibility with time and concern tended to motivate employees better, resulting in more enthusiastic and productive work habits.

So, for you bosses out there, the bottom line is your employees appreciate what you do for them. They want to feel appreciated and cared about in the workplace. The time, concern, motivation and effort you bring are really helping your employees in ways you don't see, and they are grateful. And this translates into greater success of your organization.

Mary Kelly is an instructor of economics at Hawaii Pacific University. She can be reached at mkelly@hpu.edu.

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[ON TECHNOLOGY]

**Google is top of the game
and page for searching**

By John Agsalud

One of the most frequent questions I get from friends and clients is, "What's the best search engine?"

My hands-down favorite (and, near as I can tell, most other professionals') is Google (www.google.com).

The quality I like is its amazing ability to locate what you're looking for quickly and proficiently. Google is so popular among the tech-savvy that the verb "google" (to do a Web search using Google) has become part of American lexicon. Nowadays it's obligatory to "google" a prospective business partner, vendor or even dinner date and see what's out there on the Net.

One of its newer developments is the [Google Toolbar 2.0](#), which is a plug-in to Internet Explorer. What's so cool about it? The toolbar appears at the top of your browser, and that makes it incredibly handy by allowing you to conduct a search on Google without surfing to the Google home page.

The toolbar has other great functions, the best being a pop-up ad blocker. Ad blockers have been around almost as long as pop-up ads but must be downloaded separately and often cost money. Furthermore, these ad blockers are not necessarily reliable.

Google Toolbar's pop-up blocker works well, and because it's free, it's worth a try. It operates in two modes -- it will block pop-up ads you don't want and allow you to see the pop-ups you want, such as those that you open manually. In my estimation it's worth getting Toolbar 2.0 just for this function.

There are other cool features such as a news site and an "autofill" button that automatically fills out online forms with your name, address, phone number, e-mail address and even a credit card number, which can (and should) be password-protected. According to Google, this info is kept on your box, not on the Net. Autofill is an optional feature and can be turned off.

There's also a feature for those who use Google's [Blogger.com](#) site that automates the procedure of adding a link to your blog. I can't figure out the attraction to blogs, but I said the same thing about text messaging on cell phones, so maybe I'm just turning into an old fogie.

Naturally, there also is a wireless search function that can be accessed from any number of devices, such as mobile phones, Palm handhelds and the like. To try a Google Search on your PDA, visit www.google.com/palm.

Despite (or perhaps because of) the technical sophistication, Google is easy to use.

The home page is essentially blank except for the field where you type in what you're looking for and two buttons below titled "Google Search" and "I'm Feeling Lucky." Hit the first button and you get a page of URLs in order of relevance. Click "I'm Feeling Lucky" and Google's first choice opens.

Although Google is by far the most popular search engine on the Net, there are worthy competitors. Yahoo (www.yahoo.com) is still very popular. Interestingly, for a while, all of Yahoo's searches were conducted by Google.

Another good bet is Teoma (www.teoma.com), which adroitly ranks the "communities" around a particular subject. The end user then goes to that community and picks from the chosen Web sites. For example, a search on Hawaii comes up with popular Web sites such as the University of Hawaii, the eHawaii.gov Web site and others. Teoma also generates "community" topics such as Weddings in Hawaii, Hawaii Vacations, Hawaiian Music, etc.

The advantages of this method allow you to find a theme or relevant topic without having to wade through 50 links. This provides you with a real short cut when it comes to figuring out what's important.

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