

Foreword

Sir Winston Churchill has inspired generations by his very words. He could have been talking about my inspiration to write this book for those who might benefit from it when he said, “We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give.”

Serving others by what you do and how you do it is a meaningful thing. It’s priceless when it’s done for your boss who counts on those around them to do or be many of the things reflected herein.

If you find a way to serve your boss better by reading this book, the power of the example you have set hopefully will take you down a new and brighter path in your chosen profession. Travel it well and enjoy the journey.

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Preface

We slipped into the back seat of his limo heading off to another event in the nation's capital. That came often for General Colin Powell as Joint Chiefs Chairman and for me as his assistant.

In the 10-minute ride that lay before us, I knew I could grab his undivided attention. This was to tell him I'd received the offer of another job for another boss, a pretty big one at that, a former President of the United States.

He nodded as I told him I'd been asked to be the PR guy for Ronald Reagan. When I finished, my proud moment was met at first with silence.

Then he turned his head and looked me in the eye. "Congratulations," he said. "But don't become intoxicated with the offer of power," he continued.

He was right and I knew it. Fortunately, I had declined the offer but felt I owed him that it had come from President Reagan, a man for whom he had worked as his National Security Advisor years earlier. I wished no surprise.

I knew I had the boss I wanted. I also felt I wanted to serve him longer and even better. One doesn't have to be of high rank or position to want to do that.

Whether starting out in professional life or being part of it for some time, you have a boss and also a responsibility to manage him or her like the other resources for which you're responsible.

As you advance hierarchically closer to that person to whom responsible, the challenges grow stronger as does the satisfaction if done well. It helps to have strategic vision, core values and obtainable objectives as you do so. Managing yourself and those to whom you answer sets a powerful personal example and provides for functional excellence within an organization. It doesn't hurt when such efforts are rewarded with job satisfaction, advancement within the organization, even a promotion and a raise. Helping your boss helps you.

This is a book for those who accept a common responsibility for taking care of the boss. It is a guide for the ways and means to help manage that boss effectively.

My 50 years of managing and leading others have led to many experiences of how to do or not do things in ways that either are helpful or hurtful. Taking care of business by making the boss look good was something I strived for each and every day, in each and every way.

Not only does it provide a strategic advantage in moving you from one good job to the next, it is a value-added proposition for the organization and the people in it. Managing yourself and others well is of paramount importance in your professional life. Results like those described herein can expand your portfolio of accomplishments and move you from a position of good to great.

Chapter 1 - Believe in Your Boss or Find Another

Bosses come in all shapes and sizes. They also come with a variety of temperaments and management styles. Some are easy to like, others are not even easy to be around.

As a subordinate, you may think you are stuck with the boss you have and the job you hold. I would argue there is a different way, a better way. If you're not happy with either your boss or your position, find another. But I wouldn't recommend quitting unless you have somewhere sure to go or someone new to go to.

It's incumbent for each of us to ask the question, "Do I believe in my boss?" "Can I follow my boss?" "Do I like my boss?" If the answer to all three is yes, you are in a good place and you should stick to what you have and are doing in your professional life.

By believing in your boss it's fairly easy to follow what he or she has to say or asks you to do. If not, it's time to find another.

What if you love your job and the work you do but you are not so crazy about the boss? This could be a dilemma. Moreover, this may require some action.

I had two bosses in particular during the course of my military career with whom I simply didn't get along. It was a bad fit in both situations. They were terrible leaders; they were horrible managers. They both appeared to have had charismatic bypasses.

I tried to make it work and was respectful toward them, but I finally chose to deal with it straight on. In both cases, I waited until after normal duty hours when fellow staffers were gone. I knocked on their respective doors and asked if we could talk. I told them I was not comfortable with our relationship and asked how it might best be repaired. They responded as I had expected. They mumbled something about our having to work towards improving things. I sensed they meant me making some changes.

In both cases I did my share of attempting to improve things, yet nothing seemed to change. I worked hard while moving in a direction that would lead me to reassignment. In both instances, I was chosen for an even better position of responsibility and moved on to a better place professionally.

If faced with such a dilemma, you might seek a lateral transfer. There have been cases where people have taken a step over or down or even a cut in pay to find a better way.

On the other hand, if you're one of the lucky ones and you love your boss, it makes it easier to come to work every day. I've even known some that can't wait to get to work, some who brag about what they do when they get there, some who even sing the boss's praises. What a great place to be.

This may sound like a simple test, but it's worth taking. Most of us have to look in the mirror each morning to wash our face or brush our teeth. Same at the end of the day.

When doing so in the morning, you can ask yourself this question: "Am I going off today to do something important?" It doesn't mean you have to save the world or change the course of western civilization. But if the answer is yes, you are headed in the right direction.

If at the end of the day you ask the question, "Did I do something of value today?" or "Did I make a difference?" and the answer is yes, you're in a good place. You might just want to stay where you are.

However, in this age of upward and outward mobility most of us will experience several jobs in our professional careers. Don't fear moving on if you don't enjoy your job. There likely is something better out there for each of us.

On the other hand, what if the problem is you? What if it's not so much how good a boss you have but that you can't relate to that boss or any boss? You indeed may be the problem.

If you are, you need to either fix it or find another path in which you are the person of least resistance. For if you don't, you're just a clog in the wheel of progress. We should all have golden rules to live by; ones that will serve us well. When it comes to the boss, there's a general rule to help guide you. It is, "You don't have to love `em you don't even have to like `em but you need to always remember that the boss is always the boss." That being the case, you need to consciously work with and for him or her to obtain the best possible results for you, your boss, and the organization for which you work. You'll not regret it.