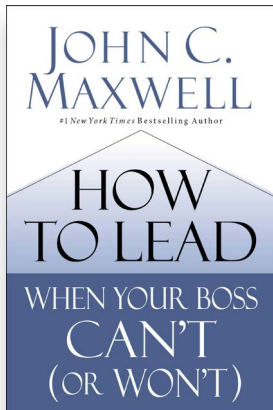


EXECUTIVE BOOK SUMMARIES

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

How to Lead When Your Boss Can't (or Won't)

THE SUMMARY

Harper Collins 2005

Chapter 1: What Happens When Bosses Don't Lead

When Leaders Don't Lead

I know I say this so often that some people are tired of hearing it, but I believe it down to the core of my being. *Everything rises and falls on leadership.* It really does. When there is no good leader directing a team, running a department, leading an organization, or heading a family, then the following results are inevitable.

Decisions Are Delayed - All good leaders are decision-makers, or help others to make them more quickly.

Agendas Are Multiplied - When no one is clearly the leader, all the people do their own thing. Leaders provide a unifying voice.

Conflicts Are Extended - One of the most important roles of a leader is conflict resolution.

Morale Becomes Low - When leaders are not leading, people lose hope. Morale can be defined as "faith in the leader at the top."

Production Is Reduced - Strong leaders are creative in finding ways to help others become productive (challenges, training, incentives, etc).

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Success Is Difficult - All organizations need leaders at every level in order to be successful.

What Happens to the Vision?

One of the worst things that happens when bosses don't lead is that the vision of the organization will dissipate, and the team will drift. Take a look at the following ways people react to vision.

1. Attack It—Criticize and Sabotage the Vision

Some people set themselves up in opposition to the vision. They didn't help create the vision, and they don't like change. They don't understand the vision or they don't agree with the vision. They don't know the vision or feel unneeded to achieve the vision. They may not be ready for the vision and are unable to contribute.

2. Ignore It—Do Their Own Thing

Some people may not attack the vision, but they don't support it either. Instead, they pretend it doesn't exist and do their own thing.

3. Abandon It—Leave the Organization

If the vision violates your principles or doesn't speak to what you value deep down, leaving the organization may be appropriate. Sometimes that is the best option—leaving with honor.

4. Adapt To It—Find A Way To Align With The Vision

At the very least, a good employee aligns himself with the vision of his organization.

5. Champion It—Take The Vision And Make It A Reality

Vision may begin with one person, but it is accomplished only through the efforts of many people.

6. Add Value To It

The most positive response to vision is to go beyond championing it and to actually add value to it. At this point, the vision becomes something more.

Bad Bosses

All good leaders share many characteristics, but bad leaders come in quite a few varieties. Here are a few:

Insecure Leaders - Insecure leaders think everything is about them, and as a result, every action, every piece of information, every decision is put through their filter of self-centeredness.

Visionless Leaders - Leaders who lack vision create two immediate problems for the people who work for them. First, they fail to provide direction or incentive to move forward. Second, they almost always lack passion to keep themselves and their people going.

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Incompetent Leaders - Incompetent leaders are ineffective, and they often stay that way. If you work with an incompetent leader, everyone on the team will have to work harder to make up for his deficiencies.

Self-Centered Leaders - Self-centered leaders attempt to advance at the expense of everyone around them.

Chameleon Leaders - When people follow a chameleon leader, they never know how he will react. As a result, his people waste a lot of time and energy trying to anticipate the leader's next move.

Political Leaders - Political leaders can also be difficult to pin down, but they are motivated by the desire to get ahead. It's hard to follow people whose decisions are based on political ambitions rather than the mission, the good of the organization, or the well-being of the people.

Controlling Leaders - Have you ever worked for someone who wants to be in the middle of everything you do? Few things are more frustrating for a competent person. It's difficult to generate momentum when the person you work for is continually interrupting your progress by micromanaging you.

Limitations On You

One of the toughest things about working for a weak leader is that you often can't be sure of where you stand. This creates tension and confusion.

1. *Lack of Empowerment* - How much authority and responsibility does your boss give you, and how clear are the lines? How clearly the lines of authority and responsibility have been drawn greatly impacts your state of mind.
2. *Undermined Initiative* - If you're a naturally good leader, you probably don't think in terms of boundaries; instead, you think in terms of opportunities. You need to realize that the stronger your natural desire to initiate, the greater potential for tension and conflict with a weak leader.
3. *An Environment That Doesn't Value Leadership* - Every organization has its own unique environment. If you have a military background, you can't walk into a corporate environment and expect it to function like army. If your experience is in large corporations, and you go work in a mom-and-pop business, you will have problems if you don't adapt.
4. *Lack of Clear Job Parameters* - Have you ever noticed the level of tension you experience when starting a new job? Why? Because you don't really know what is expected of you. If you're working without clear expectations, you won't feel like you're on solid ground.

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5. *Lack of Appreciation* - When you work in the middle of an organization under a weak boss, you may not get much public recognition or appreciation. That's just the way it is. You need to decide for yourself if you receive enough satisfaction to keep you going where you are.

If the leader you have to follow isn't a good leader, it doesn't mean you can't succeed, but it will be more difficult. The good news is you can make a positive impact through your leadership where you are, even if you report to someone who is one of the bad-boss types I described.

Chapter 2: Lead Yourself Well Before Anything Else

Credibility Through Self-Management

If you want to be successful in your career, you cannot afford *not* to lead yourself well. I have observed that most people put too much emphasis on decision making and too little on decision managing. As a result, they lack focus, discipline, intentionality, and purpose. If you want to gain credibility with your boss and others, focus on taking care of business in seven areas.

1. *Manage Your Emotions* - Nobody likes to spend time around an emotional time bomb who may "go off" at any moment. You must determine when to display emotions and when to delay them.
2. *Manage Your Time* - Determine every day which tasks are most important, and do them first. Second, ask yourself how much time a given task is worth before you start it, and try to complete it in that time frame.
3. *Manage Your Priorities* - Focus 80% of your time on work where you are strongest, 15% where you are learning, and 5% in other necessary areas. Stop doing things that aren't necessary and don't bring a high return.
4. *Manage Your Energy* - Do your most important work when you're at your best: when your energy is high and your mind is sharp. Do the things that don't seem to matter during your slump times.
5. *Manage Your Thinking* - The greatest enemy of good thinking is busyness. If you can't stop to think during your workday, get in the habit of jotting down things that need good think-time after hours. A minute of thinking is often more valuable than an hour of talk or unplanned work.
6. *Manage Your Words* - If you wish to make sure your words carry weight, then weigh them well. If you have something worthwhile to say, say it briefly and well. Sometimes the best thing to do is remain silent.
7. *Manage Your Personal Life* - If your personal life is a mess, it will eventually turn everything else sour. One of my definitions of success has been this: having those who are closest to me love and respect me the most. I want the people who work with me to respect me too, but not at the expense of my family.

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Making Better Decisions

Self-leadership also involves thinking the way a leader does and making decisions based on it.

Think Longer Term - Focus on more than just the task at hand. Good self-leaders look ahead, whether it be a few hours, a few days, or a few years.

See Within the Larger Context - Look at how something will impact those above, beside, and below you. See your area as part of the larger process.

Push Boundaries - Leadership is about taking things forward. Think outside the box and take responsibility for finding a better way, for making improvements. Gently push boundaries without being pushy.

Put Greater Emphasis on Intangibles - Leadership is influence, and what could be more intangible than that? You'll need to learn how to deal with things like morale, motivation, momentum, emotions, attitudes, atmosphere, and timing — things that can't always be measured.

Learn to Rely on Intuition - Leaders learn to work with intangibles by learning to rely on intuition. The more you focus on principles instead of practices, the sharper your intuition will become. Pay attention to your gut feelings, then pay more attention to see what happens to build your intuition.

Invest Your Power in Others - Look for ways to share whatever power you have. Leading isn't about controlling; it's about releasing. Look for good people and invest in them, coach and encourage them, with the mindset that it's all the better if they outshine you after you empower them.

See Yourself as an Agent of Change - Leadership is a moving target. Get comfortable with change. Think people, think progress, and think intangibles.

Develop and Maintain a Great Attitude

People who work for bad bosses often feel unrecognized and unappreciated. How do you keep your chin up?

Concentrate More on Your Duties Than Your Dreams - Don't lose sight of the responsibilities right in front of you. Pay more attention to production than promotion. If you do good work, you will be more content with your job.

Appreciate the Value of Your Position - You make what you do important by valuing it yourself and doing your best. If you focus your attention on being somewhere else, you will neither enjoy where you are nor do what you must to be successful. Stay in the present.

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Find Satisfaction in Knowing the Real Reason for the Success of a Project - When you do a job well, and you know the impact of the work you did, let that give you great satisfaction. Let it motivate you. The definition of high morale is: "I make a difference."

Embrace the Compliments of Others in Similar Situations - There is no higher compliment than acknowledgment and appreciation from someone whose circumstances, position, or experience is similar to yours. A musician may enjoy a compliment from a fan, but praise from another musician means more.

Avoid Self-Promotion and Engage in Selfless Promotion - Take credit vs Give credit. Hog the ball vs Pass the ball. Deflect the blame vs Accept responsibility. Manipulate others vs Motivate others. The willingness to focus on selfless promotion comes from an abundance mind-set — there are plenty of resources, credit and opportunities to go around. A scarcity mind-set is at the root of most conflict.

Chapter 3: Find Ways to Work with Your Boss

Start With Your Heart

The majority of bad bosses have no idea how bad they really are as leaders. First of all, you need to come to terms with the fact that it's not your job to fix your boss. Nor can you. Instead, what you need to do is find ways to work *with* your boss, not against him or her.

- 1. Develop A Genuine Relationship With Your Boss* - If you make your leader your adversary, you will create a no-win situation. Instead, build a relational bridge. Try to get to know him. Build a solid professional relationship.
- 2. Identify and Appreciate Your Boss's Strengths* - Everybody has strengths—even an ineffective leader. Strive to find them in the person you work for. Think about how those positives would benefit the team or organization.
- 3. Commit Yourself to Adding Value To Those Strengths* - Once you have discerned your boss's strengths and how those characteristics can be an asset to the organization, look for ways to help your boss leverage them.
- 4. Find Ways To Complement Your Boss's Weakness* - Wise leaders staff their weaknesses. You can play that gap-filling role with your boss. Be tactful, but offer to carry the ball in his areas of weakness.
- 5. Expose Your Leader To Good Leadership Resources* - As you discover good books, audiobooks, videos while working to improve your leadership skills, share them with your boss: "I thought you might enjoy this resource too."

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6. *Publicly Affirm Your Leader* - Some people fear if they say positive things about an ineffective boss, they will be misleading others or compromising their own integrity. If you speak the truth and focus on your boss's strengths, what you will do is improve your relationship with your boss and increase your influence.

Build Relational Chemistry

When you're working with a leader who can't or won't lead, what you're really trying to do is lead up—positively influence the person above you.

1. *Listen To Your Boss's Heartbeat* - All people have dreams, issues, or causes that connect with them. Those things are like the keys to their lives.
2. *Know Your Boss's Priorities* - Make it your goal to learn what his do-or-die priorities are to better understand and communicate with your leader.
3. *Catch Your Boss's Enthusiasm* - If you share your boss's enthusiasm, it's instant common ground. It will create a bond between you and your leader.
4. *Try To Support Your Boss's Vision* - Your goal is to support your boss's vision (unless it undermines your organization's vision—then support the organization's vision and try not to antagonize your boss).
5. *Connect With Your Boss's Interests* - Identify and connect with the interests of your boss if you can—pet projects at work, as well as his hobbies and interests outside of work. Can you name them?
6. *Understand Your Boss's Personality* - If you want to connect with your boss, you need to be the one who adjusts to your leader's personality and how you interact.
7. *Earn Your Boss's Trust* - When you take time to invest in relational chemistry with your leader, the eventual result will be trust—in other words, relational currency. ('Loyalty publicly results in leverage privately.')
8. *Learn To Work With Your Boss's Weakness* - You can't build a positive relationship with your boss if you secretly disrespect him because of his weaknesses. Learn to work with the weak spots and focus on the positives.
9. *Respect Your Boss's Family* - If your boss's spouse doesn't like or trust you, the relationship between the two of you will always be strained, even though it may be through no fault of your own.

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Carry The Weight

Responsibility weighs heavily on leaders. Another thing you can do to help your boss: reduce their load. If you help *lift* the load, you help your leader succeed. (I recommend you lift up, not suck up.)

Lifting Shows You Are A Team Player - You're showing everyone you are a positive contributor by placing the organization and team ahead of yourself.

Lifting Shows Gratitude For Being On The Team - Gratitude is one of the most attractive of all personal attributes. Everyone appreciates being appreciated for the things she does.

Lifting Makes You Part of Something Bigger - When you are part of something bigger, it makes you bigger. You cannot contribute to something significant without being changed for the better.

Lifting Gets You Noticed - When you lift people up, they can't help but notice it. Even if others aren't aware of what you're doing, the person being lifted is. If you continually help others, others will eventually want to help you.

Lifting Increases Your Value and Influence - Load lifters have a special place in the hearts of their leaders. If you make your boss feel that she is better off because you are part of the team, then your value and influence go up.

How to Lift Your Boss's Load

1. *Start By Consistently Doing Your Own Job Well* - The first important step in lifting your boss's load is to prevent him from having to lift yours.
2. *Any Time You Find A Problem, Provide a Solution* - Don't dump problems on the boss's desk. Bring a solution—more than one is even better.
3. *Tell Your Boss What He Needs To Hear With Tact* - One way to become a person the boss trusts is to tell them the truth. But you have to be sensitive.
4. *Go The Second Mile* - When you do more than asked, you will certainly stand out from the crowd. A whatever-it-takes attitude can emerge as a go-to player and become members of the boss's inner circle.
5. *Stand Up For Your Boss Whenever You Can* - Once a decision has been made, the debate ends. Loyalty means executing the decision as if it were your own.
6. *Stand In For Your Boss Whenever You Can* - Individuals at all levels also represent the people they work for. If you represent your boss positively, he will appreciate it.

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7. *Ask Your Boss How You Can Lift the Load* - It's good to anticipate what your boss may need or want. It's even better to come right out and ask. If you are consistently doing your own job well, chances are your leader will be glad to tell you how you can help.

Chapter 4: Develop Your Influence Wherever You Are

Why People Often Wait to Develop Influence

You don't need any kind of title or position to get started. You can increase your influence no matter where you are in the organization. Sadly, too many people wait too long to start working on their influence in their organizations. Often they're waiting for a position to give them permission.

1. *The Destination Myth ("When I become the boss, I'll learn how to lead")* - You need to start developing your influence before you need it. Leading as well as you can, wherever you can, will prepare you for more responsibility. When opportunity comes, it's too late to prepare.
2. *The Inexperience Myth ("When I'm the boss, I'll be able to control what happens")* - The desire and belief that you're capable of improving an organization are often the marks of a leader. But without experience as the boss, you probably overestimate the amount you would have if you were in charge. To make positive changes, you need influence.
3. *The Freedom Myth ("When I become the boss, I'll do what I want")* - Being the boss doesn't mean you don't have limits. It doesn't matter what job you do or what position you obtain; you will have limits. That's just the way life is. Your responsibility may even increase faster than your authority.
4. *The Potential Myth ("I can't reach my potential until I'm the boss")* - I believe that people should strive for the top of their game, not the top of the organization. Each of us should work to reach our own potential, not necessarily the corner office.
5. *The All-Or-Nothing Myth ("If I can't be the boss, then there's no point in trying to lead")* - You can't allow the frustrations you feel to keep you from developing your leadership and growing your influence. Get in the game. You do not need to be the boss to make a difference.

How Developing Influence Makes A Difference

Every Time You Add A Good Leader, You Get a Better Team - They inspire their people, help them work together, and they get results.

Every Time You Add A Good Leader, All the Leaders in the Organization Get Better - Good leaders raise the bar and challenge other leaders to improve.

Good Leaders Add Value To The Leaders Above Them - Leaders closer to the people in the trenches can extend the influence of the higher leaders.

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Good Leaders In The Middle Release Top Leaders To Focus On Their Priorities - Leading where you are empowers your team when you move up.

Good Leadership Where You Are Challenges Leaders Above You To Continue Growing - Leaders try harder when they see other leaders making significant contributions.

Good Leadership Throughout The Organization Gives It A Future - Today's workers are tomorrow's leaders in the middle, and today's leaders in the middle are tomorrow's leaders at the top.

Who People Want To Follow

People Follow People They Know—Someone who cares.

People Follow People They Trust—Someone with good character.

People Follow People They Respect—Someone with high competence.

People Follow People They Admire—Someone with commitment.

What To Expect On The Influence Journey

- 1. Leadership Is A Journey That Starts Where You Are, Not Where You Want to Be* - You need to succeed where you are now before you can move up.
- 2. Leadership Skills Are Similar, But The "League of Play" Changes* - To succeed at the next level, the quality of your game must rise.
- 3. Greater Responsibilities Come Only After Handling Smaller Ones Well* - A person who has never led must start by trying to influence just one person.
- 4. Leading At Your Current Level Creates Your Resume For Going To The Next Level* - Leaders will look at your track record to decide if you can do bigger jobs.
- 5. When You Can Lead Volunteers Well, You Can Lead Almost Anyone* - Because with volunteers you have no leverage. Test yourself.

Chapter 5: Avoid Landmines That Could Make Your Situation Worse

Avoid Creeping Discontent

You may be able to improve your relationship with your boss and help your situation by doing the things I've suggested. There's no guarantee that things *will* get better. But I guarantee things *can* get worse. It's essential that you maintain a sense of positive contentment despite the challenges if you want to be successful.

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1. *Develop Strong Relationships With Key People* - It's more important to get along with people than to get ahead of them. Over time, a potential adversary can become an ally.
2. *Engage In Continual Communication* - As you interact with your boss, let him know how you are contributing and advancing the vision
3. *Gain Experience And Maturity* - If you maintain a longer view as you focus on your responsibilities, you will develop patience and gain wisdom.
4. *Put The Team Above Your Personal Success* - One player may be crucial to a team, but one player cannot make a team.

Stay Away From Office Politics

I would define "playing politics" as changing who you appear to be or what you normally do to gain an advantage with whoever currently has power or can help you in the moment. Political people are fickle and opportunistic.

1. *Avoid Gossip* - Gossip diminishes the person being talked about, diminishes the person who is saying unkind things, and even diminishes the person who listens to it. Praise people publicly and criticize them privately.
2. *Stay Away From Petty Arguments* - Avoid getting sucked into grudges, feuds and arguments. Don't take sides in other's battles.
3. *Stay Up For What's Right, Not Just For What's Popular* - Consider the Golden Rule — do to others what you would have them do to you.
4. *Look At All Sides Of An Issue* - It always pays to avoid being dogmatic or stuck in one box in your thinking.
5. *Don't Protect Your Turf* - Political leaders protect whatever is theirs because they don't want to lose power. Winning is their primary motivation.
6. *Say What You Mean, and Mean What You Say* - To develop trust, you must be more than competent—you must also be credible and consistent.

Never Make Your Boss Feel Like You're Wasting Her Time

For all leaders, time is precious. Time is the one commodity that cannot be increased. Be careful not to waste your boss's time.

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1. *Invest 10X* - Spend 10 minutes preparing for every minute that you meet.
2. *Don't Make Your Boss Think For You* - It is important to think for yourself.
3. *Bring Something To The Table* - Add value to conversations and meetings.
4. *If Asked To Speak, Don't Wing It* - Others can tell and you lose credibility.
5. *Get To The Bottom Line* - Don't share every detail, just make your point.

Know When To Push . . .

1. *Do I Know Something My Boss Doesn't But Needs To?* Especially if it's a great problem or a great opportunity.
2. *Is Time Running Out?* There's an old saying: 'Better one word in time than two afterward.'
3. *Are My Responsibilities At Risk?* If you are having difficulty getting your tasks done, inform your boss instead of not telling him and failing alone.
4. *Can I Help My Boss Win?* If you are proactive in helping your boss accomplish his priorities, your efforts will be noted by those around you.

. . . And When To Back Off

1. *Am I Promoting My Own Personal Agenda?* If you push your boss inappropriately too often, he may push you right out the door.
2. *Have I Already Made My Point?* It's one thing to communicate and another to try to coerce your boss.
3. *Must Everyone But You Take The Risk?* It's easier to risk someone else's resources, time, or reputation than your own. Your boss is more likely to listen if you have "skin in the game."
4. *Does The Atmosphere Say "No"?* Don't let a good idea get rained on because you picked the wrong day to introduce it.
5. *Does My Request Exceed The Relationship?* A wise person moves forward cautiously when he knows he has to enter a minefield.

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Chapter 6: Prove Your Worth Daily and Never Stop Growing

Become An Expert At Your Craft

Few things speak more loudly than excellence at one's craft. The first place you should strive to prove your value is in your craft. Most people don't start out as leaders. Expertise does not make someone a leader, but it may give them their chance. What can you do every day to help you become better at your core competency?

1. *Learn Your Craft Today* - There is no time like the present to become an expert at your craft. You don't have to be what you used to be.
2. *Talk About Your Craft Today* - Strategic conversations with those ahead of you in experience and skill and learn from their strengths.
3. *Practice Your Craft Today* - The only way to improve is to practice it until you know it inside and out. Get out of your comfort zone and try new things.

Do Jobs Others Won't

Becoming an expert at your craft takes times, but you can prove your worth right now by taking on jobs others won't—even those outside your craft or comfort zone. Do the things that will make the greatest impact and create influence with others.

1. *Take The Tough Jobs* - The ability to accomplish difficult tasks earns the respect of others very quickly. Don't be afraid to try.
2. *Pay Your Dues* - You will have to sacrifice some personal goals for the sake of others and do so without fanfare or complaint.
3. *Be Willing To Work In Obscurity* - If leaders paid their dues and gave their best in obscurity, ego is usually not a problem. The key is being willing to do something because it matters, not because it will get you noticed.
4. *Succeed With Difficult People* - It's wise to find a way to succeed with people who are hard to work with, instead of avoiding them.
5. *Put Yourself On the Line* - You cannot play safe and prove your value at the same time. Never be casual about risking what is not yours.
6. *Admit Faults But Never Make Excuses* - It's easier to move from failure to success than from excuses to success.

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7. *Be The First To Step Up And Help* - When you help someone on the team, you help the whole team. It doesn't matter whom you're helping.
8. *Take Responsibility For Your Responsibilities* - You will get better after failing if you take ownership and have a teachable spirit.
9. *Perform Tasks That Are "Not Your Job"* - Good employees think in terms of doing what it takes to get the job done and to fulfill the vision of the organization.

Become Your Boss's Go-To Producer

All leaders are looking for people who can step up and make a difference when it matters. Team members who can make things happen are their go-to-players. Few things elevate a person above his peers the way becoming a solid producer does.

1. *Produce When The Pressure's On* - They find ways to make things happen.
2. *Produce When The Resources Are Few* - They are innovative and productive when they have little or nothing to work with.
3. *Produce When The Momentum Is Low* - Organizations have only three kinds of people—*Momentum Breakers* (bottom 10%), *Momentum Takers* (middle 80%), and *the Momentum Makers* (top 10%) who actually create energy in the organization. Leaders rely on these difference makers.
4. *Produce When The Load Is Heavy* - If you have the willingness and capacity to lift the load of the boss, you will have influence with him.
5. *Produce When The Leader Is Absent* - If you step forward to lead in a leadership vacuum, you have a good chance of distinguishing yourself.
6. *Produce When The Time is Limited* - Not matter how tough the situation is, go-to producers deliver the goods.

Maintaining Your Balance As You Prove Your Worth

The things I'm suggesting you do to prove yourself are not easy. They can produce a lot of stress, especially since I'm asking you to take the high road with your boss. But doing these things will give you the best chance to shine and succeed. How do you accomplish this with grace, tact, and calm?

Find A Way To Relieve Stress - golf, jog, kickboxing, yoga, get a massage.

Know What To "Own" and What To Let Go - Learn what your boss expects.

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Never Violate The Trust Of Your Boss - Authority comes from faithfulness.

Never Stop Growing As A Leader

The final step you need to take in order to be successful working under a bad leader is to keep growing and improving as a leader. Why?

The Better You Get, The More People Listen - Competence is the key to credibility, and credibility is the key to influencing others.

The Better You Get, The Greater Your Value Today - If you are not moving forward as a learner, then you are moving backward as a leader.

The Better You Get, The Greater Your Potential For Tomorrow - An investment in your leadership growth is an investment in your ability, your adaptability, and your promotability. To be better tomorrow, become better today. My life began changing when I stopped setting goals for where I wanted to be and started setting the course for who I wanted to become. I have discovered that the key to personal development is being more growth oriented than goal oriented.