

IT'S OKAY TO BE THE BOSS

THE MANAGEMENT WORKSHOP

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

BRUCE TULGAN

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Too many leaders, managers, and supervisors are failing to lead, manage, and supervise. They simply do not take charge on a day-to-day basis. They fail to spell out expectations every step of the way, track performance constantly, correct failure, and reward success. They are afraid to, or they don't want to, or they just don't know how to. All across the workplace, at all levels of organizations in every industry, there is a shocking and profound lack of daily guidance, direction, feedback, and support for employees. This is what I've termed "under-management"—the opposite of micromanagement.

Under-management is costing organizations a fortune every day:

- *Fires are started that never would have started.*
- *Fires get out of control that could have been put out easily.*
- *Resources are squandered.*
- *People go in the wrong direction for days or weeks on end before anybody notices.*
- *Low performers hide out and collect paychecks.*
- *Mediocre performers mistake themselves for high performers.*
- *High performers become frustrated and start looking for other jobs.*
- *And managers do lots of tasks that should be delegated to someone else.*

It's always been hard to manage people. Nowadays, it's a whole lot harder to manage people. Everybody is under more pressure. Employees are expected to work longer, harder, smarter, faster, and better. And they rely on their immediate bosses more than any other individual for helping them succeed and for meeting their basic needs and expectations at work. Everybody wants to know, "What's the deal around here? What do you want from me? And what do I get for my hard work today?"

Be the boss who says, "Great news, I'm the boss! I consider that a sacred responsibility. I'm going to make sure that everything goes well around here. I'm going to help you get a bunch of work done very well, very fast, all day long. I'm going to set you up for success every step of the way. I'm going to spell out expectations for you every step of the way. I'm going to help you plan. I'm going to work with you to clarify goals, guidelines, and specifications. I'm going to help you break big deadlines into smaller time frames with concrete performance benchmarks. I'm going to go over standard operating procedures. I'm going to offer reminders. I'm going to provide checklists and other tools. I'm going to help you keep track of what you are doing and how you are doing it every step of the way. I'm going to help you monitor and measure and document your success every step of the way. I'm going to help you solve problems as soon as they occur, so they don't fester and grow into bigger problems. I'm going to help you find the shortcuts, avoid the pitfalls, and follow the best practices. Count on me. When you need something, I'm going to help you find it. When you want something, I'm going to help you earn it."

WHAT IS THE PROGRAM DESIGNED TO ACHIEVE?

This program is designed to change the way managers think about their supervisory responsibilities, to wit, strong and highly engaged is better than weak and hands-off! The program teaches dozens of best practices to help leaders, managers, and supervisors get much better at leading, managing, and supervising. After this program, participants will be better able to:

- *Build relationships of trust and confidence with employees.*
- *Delegate tasks, responsibilities, and projects.*
- *Keep employees focused and moving in the right direction.*
- *Increase productivity, quality, retention of high-performers, and turnover among low-performers.*
- *Sharply reduce waste, inefficiency, errors, down time, and conflict among employees.*

WHAT SPECIFIC SKILLS OR KNOWLEDGE DOES THE PROGRAM COVER?

The program teaches immediately actionable best practices in a clear step-by-step guide back to the basics of strong highly engaged management:

STEP 1. Get in the habit of managing every day. Best practices for conducting regular one-on-ones with direct reports and others.

STEP 2. Learn to talk like a performance coach. Best practices for communicating clearly and effectively.

STEP 3. Take it one person at a time. Best practices to help managers work effectively with each of their direct reports based on the particular strengths and weaknesses of those individuals.

STEP 4. Make accountability a real process. Best practices for working through or around obstacles to holding employees accountable.

STEP 5. Tell people what to do and how to do it. Best practices for making expectations clear.

STEP 6. Track performance every step of the way. Best practices to help managers monitor, measure, and document employee performance.

STEP 7. Solve small problems before they turn into big problems. The focus here is two-fold: First are best practices for managers to help employees solve problems in productivity, quality, and behavior. Second are best practices for managers to deal with performance problems that persist.

STEP 8. Do more for some people and less for others. Best practices to help managers tie rewards to performance; short-term and long, financial and non-financial.

WHAT INDIVIDUAL COMPONENTS DOES THE PROGRAM INCLUDE?

It contains a Facilitator's Guide including an introduction to the model, a script for facilitation, a flash drive with a PowerPoint slide deck, short videos to aid in instruction, and a sample participant workbook.

WHAT COMPONENTS DO I NEED TO PURCHASE TO GET STARTED?

One Facilitator's Guide for yourself and one Participant Workbook for each workshop attendee.

WHO IS THE PROGRAM DESIGNED FOR?

It's Okay to Be the Boss: The Management Workshop is designed for anyone in a managerial or supervisory role who is concerned about retaining valuable employees and helping them work more productively. Although the primary audience is mid-level managers with some experience, the workshop can also be conducted for people who are new to managing and for senior-level people who manage other managers.

HOW LONG DOES THE PROGRAM TAKE TO COMPLETE?

The ideal length of the program is one full day, with seven or eight classroom hours. But it is designed to be flexible, and there are options throughout for expanding and contracting the program.

HOW MUCH PREPARATION TIME WILL IT TAKE TO FACILITATE?

At a minimum, trainers should carefully read the book, *It's Okay to Be the Boss*; watch the short video overviews featuring me providing an introduction to the model and each of the eight back-to-basic techniques; review the Facilitator's Guide carefully; and personally complete each of the participant exercises. My own very strong advice is to do at least one nearly full-length rehearsal-style walk-through of the program, speaking aloud as if you were actually working with a group. Rehearse!

DO I NEED ANY SPECIAL SKILLS TO FACILITATE THE PROGRAM?

The more you think, learn, plan, and rehearse, the better things will go. This program is very much about the real-world challenges of real-world managers. You can't fake it. If you don't have real-world management experience yourself, don't pretend you do. Rather, make the program about the real-world management experience of the participants. If you don't know the answer to a question, ask the real-world managers in the room what they think. But don't stray from the message of strong, highly engaged management.

WHAT'S UNIQUE OR DIFFERENT ABOUT THIS PROGRAM OR ITS APPROACH?

The program is very concrete, very real-world, very back-to-basics, tactical, and immediately actionable.

The program also reflects a very strong philosophical point of departure: Weak hands-off management is the norm among most managers, but strong, highly engaged management is much better for everyone involved.

For too long now, the pendulum of management thinking in books and training has swung too far in exactly the wrong direction, toward weak, hands-off management.

“False empowerment” has become the prevailing approach in management thinking, books, and training. In the “false empowerment” approach, managers should not keep close track of employees and they definitely should not zero in on employee failures. Employees should be made to feel they “own” their work and should be set free to make their own decisions. Managers are merely facilitators, there to align the natural talents and desires of employees with fitting roles in the workplace. Managers should not tell people how to do their jobs, but rather let employees come up with their own methods. The idea is that, if you make employees feel good inside, the results will take care of themselves.

But face it. Somebody is in charge and employees will “be held accountable.” Employees do not have the “power” to do things their own way in the workplace. They are not free to ignore tasks they don’t like. They are not free to do as they please. Rather, employees are only free to make their own decisions within defined guidelines and parameters that are determined by others according to the strict logic of the enterprise at hand. Responsibility without sufficient direction and support is not empowerment. It is downright negligent.

The fact that false empowerment just doesn’t work is evidenced by the fact that nearly every organization I know of has tried one strategy after another either to force managers to lead with a stronger hand or to somehow end-run the management part of leadership.

There is no end-run around the management part of leadership. Those in leadership positions simply must take charge of their people: give orders, track performance, correct failure, and reward success, every step of the way. These are just the basics of managing people.

Managers who try desperately to avoid spending time managing people always spend lots of time managing people anyway. That’s because when a manager avoids spending time up-front making sure things go right, things always go wrong. Small problems pile up. Often, small problems fester unattended until they become so big that they cannot be ignored. By that point, the manager has no choice but to chase down the problems and solve them. In crisis, the manager is virtually guaranteed to be less efficient, a further waste of time. So these managers run around solving problems that never had to happen, getting big problems under control that should have been solved easily, recouping squandered resources, dealing with long-standing performance problems, feeling even more pressed for time. That means that, in all likelihood, they will go right back to avoiding managing people, and the next time that they’ll make time for management is the next time there is another big problem to chase down and solve.



This program teaches managers to put their management time where it belongs and to attend to the basics every step of the way.

In the initial segment of the program, “false empowerment” is challenged head-on, along with six other myths. Here is a quick guide to all seven myths and the corresponding realities that frame the philosophical point of departure for this program:

1. **THE MYTH OF EMPOWERMENT:** *The way to empower people is to leave them alone and let them manage themselves.* What is the reality? Almost everybody performs better with more guidance, direction, and support from a more experienced person. If you want to truly empower people, then you simply must define goals, with clear guidelines and concrete deadlines. Within clearly articulated parameters, a direct report has power. Limited power—yes! But it also has the great virtue of being real power.
2. **THE MYTH OF FAIRNESS:** *The way to be fair is to treat everyone the same.* What is the reality? What’s truly fair is doing more for some people and less for others, based on what they deserve—based on their performance.
3. **THE MYTH OF THE FALSE NICE GUY.** *The only way to be strong is to act like a jerk, but I want to be a “nice guy.”* What is the reality? Real “nice guy” managers do what it takes to help employees succeed so those employees can deliver great service for customers and earn more rewards for themselves.
4. **THE MYTH OF THE DIFFICULT CONVERSATION:** *Being hands-off is the way to avoid confrontations with employees.* What is the reality? Being a weak manager makes these confrontations inevitable, whereas being a strong manager means that these confrontations rarely occur, and when they do happen they are not so painful after all.
5. **THE MYTH OF RED TAPE:** *Managers are prevented from being strong because there are so many factors beyond their control—red tape, corporate culture, senior management, limited resources.* What is the reality? Focusing on the many factors that *are* within your control is the way to make yourself stronger. Meanwhile, learn the rules and red tape so you learn how to work within and around them (another way to increase your strength).
6. **THE MYTH OF THE NATURAL LEADER:** *I am not “good at” managing.* What is the reality? The best managers are people—natural or not—who learn proven techniques, practice those techniques diligently until they become skills, and continue practicing them until they become habits.
7. **THE MYTH OF TIME:** *There’s isn’t enough time to manage people.* What is the reality? Since your time is so limited, you definitely don’t have time to deal with all the things that go wrong when you do not spend enough time up-front managing people.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

BRUCE TULGAN (New Haven, CT) is internationally recognized as a leading expert on leadership and management. He is an advisor to business leaders all over the world, the author or coauthor of numerous books, most recently *Not Everyone Gets a Trophy: How to Manage Generation Y* (Jossey-Bass, 2009), the classic *Managing Generation X* (1995), and the recent best-seller *It's Okay to Be the Boss* (2007). Since founding the management training firm RainmakerThinking in 1993, he has been a sought-after keynote speaker and seminar leader. Tulgan has personally trained tens of thousands of managers in a wide range of industries. His work has been the subject of thousands of news stories around the world, and he has written for dozens of publications, including *The New York Times*, *USA Today*, *Human Resources* magazine, and *The Harvard Business Review*. He also holds a fourth degree black belt in Okinawan Karate and is married to Debby Applegate, who won the 2007 Pulitzer Prize for Biography. Tulgan's weekly v-log (video newsletter) is available for free at www.rainmakerthinking.com.

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