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"Achieving Excellence" Issue 29 - August 2025

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Welcome

Welcome to the August issue of "Achieving Excellence" which is inspired by clients and friends of Seventeen Gorman Advisors. We enjoy new ways of thinking and new ways of helping you achieve your goals.

Seventeen Gorman Advisors is a consulting practice focused on improving individual and organizational performance through skill building programs and developmental services.

Our approach to problem solving and issue resolution involves client participation at all points in the process. Above all, we listen to our clients to understand their needs and goals so that the solution we develop together - as true partners - provides a sustainable business advantage.

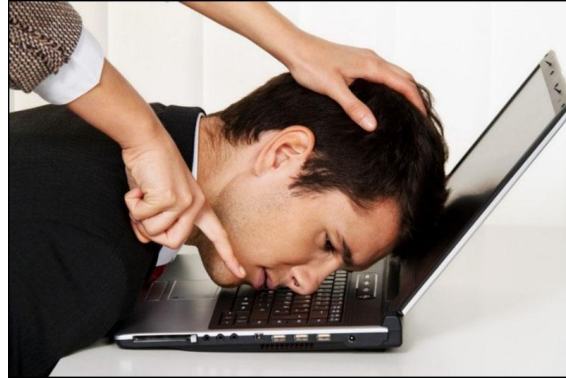
Best Regards,

Jeffrey C. Leventry
Principal

In Your Quest For Excellence

"The worst part of a toxic boss is not just their behavior, but the way they make you doubt your own worth and abilities. (*Balmy Quotes*)

How to Recognize & Effectively Manage the Bully Boss



Over the course of my business career, I have been fortunate to work for several great managers who created a productive work environment where performance flourished. They were supportive, treated us with respect and motivated us to perform at optimal levels as we worked together to accomplish meaningful individual and team goals.

Sadly, I also worked for 3 “Bully Bosses” who made coming to work a dreadful experience for me and my teammates. They undermined our efforts, utilized threats and other aggressive behavior, and made our work life unduly stressful.

Since we normally do not choose our boss, it is important to understand how to recognize and effectively deal with the bully boss. This is especially true in today’s business environment since the traditional image of a bully boss is becoming less common in the workplace, and the tactics they now use are more subtle and less obvious.

It is also critical to appreciate what the best companies do to screen manager candidates, so they do not unknowingly create the next bully boss.

How can you recognize a manager who is a bully boss?

While many of the common traits of a bully boss are obvious, there are other additional red flags to be aware of that may not be so apparent. While any 1 of these character traits can be problematic for the employee, more than 1 can be traumatic and genuinely interfere with a healthy workplace.

Here are some of the hallmark attributes of today’s bully boss:

- Constantly criticizing members of the team even when it is unwarranted.
- Blocking promotional opportunities, career progress or training opportunities.
- Yelling at employees in private or in front of their co-workers.
- Inconsistent treatment toward different individuals on the team, including showing favoritism toward those who are better liked or connected with

the manager.

- Purposely excluding targeted employees from high-profile projects, important meetings or social events.
- Falsely accusing employees of making mistakes or not submitting work product by the deadline.
- Removing duties or responsibilities from an employee without an explanation or justification.

It is important to understand that the impact from bullying behavior is not just felt by the victims themselves. It can also impede creativity, reduce team productivity, fuel a toxic company culture and place the organization at risk of costly litigation for failing to properly address the issue.

How can an employee effectively maneuver their bully boss?

While working for a bully boss is never an easy proposition, there are proven approaches that can reduce the likelihood that their tactics will make your situation unbearable and interfere with performing your job. Chief among them are the following:

- Demonstrate technical competence and expertise so your value to your boss, the team and the organization is beyond reproach.
- Find a way to get along with your boss and earn their respect, so that they will be less likely to target you and instead focus on your performance and value to the company.
- Remain professional in all of your interactions, take the higher ground, and never utilize bullying tactics that mirror the boss's approach.
- If possible, have a candid conversation with them that expresses your concerns and articulates the impact that their behavior has on your performance and well-being.
- Engage trusted colleagues, mentors and HR Business Partners who can provide guidance, support and advice on how to best navigate your situation.
- Focus on activities that reduce your stress and promote a healthy work-life balance while you cope with the fallout of working for a bully boss. Taking a long walk, engaging in a rigorous workout or going to dinner with friends may provide perspective and alleviate some of the stress you experience with your bully boss.

In order to increase the likelihood of success, I suggest using a combination of the above approaches. In addition, try a different mixture of tactics if the first effort fails to alleviate your situation. As a last resort, you may need to seek a job opportunity in a different area of your organization or leave the firm altogether.

What are the best companies doing to evaluate manager candidates, so they do not create the next bully boss?

First and foremost, there is no ironclad recipe that guarantees that a new boss will not exhibit some of the behaviors of a bully boss. However, the best firms have developed processes for hiring and developing managers who will act ethically and exemplify manager best practices. Their hiring process is rigorous and multi-faceted, combining a range of assessment tools and interviews to thoroughly evaluate a candidate's skills, experience, management / leadership

potential and culture fit.

This is what the best firms do when evaluating who assumes the manager role in their organizations:

- For internal manager candidates, they utilize a formal nomination process. In order to be considered for a manager position, the candidate must be nominated by their current manager who completes a form that articulates the reasons why the employee would be a good fit for the manager role.
- They create a job description that clearly articulates the duties and responsibilities of the manager role, including the hard and soft skills that are required to perform the role successfully.
- They utilize both behavioral and situational interview questions to predict future behavior in specific work situations. Behavioral questions assess how the candidate handled past situations, while situational questions are hypothetical questions to assess how they would handle specific workplace challenges.
- They include panel interviews involving multiple individuals from different departments and levels to effectuate a comprehensive evaluation of all manager candidates. Each interviewer then offers his / her assessment of the candidate using an evaluation form.
- They utilize assessment tools that evaluate not only technical skills and experience, but also critical leadership qualities, problem-solving abilities, and personality traits that contribute to managerial success. The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) and DiSC Assessment are two popular personality tests that are valid and often employed as part of this process.
- They employ manager simulations that present candidates with hypothetical management scenarios to gauge their decision-making skills and ability to handle / resolve difficult interpersonal business challenges.

Implementing the above approaches for manager selection is a time-consuming process that significantly improves the chance of hiring effective and successful managers and typically yields a more engaged and productive workforce that contributes to a successful organizational culture. It also enhances the probability that you do not inadvertently hire the next bully boss who sabotages team morale and causes unwanted employee turnover.

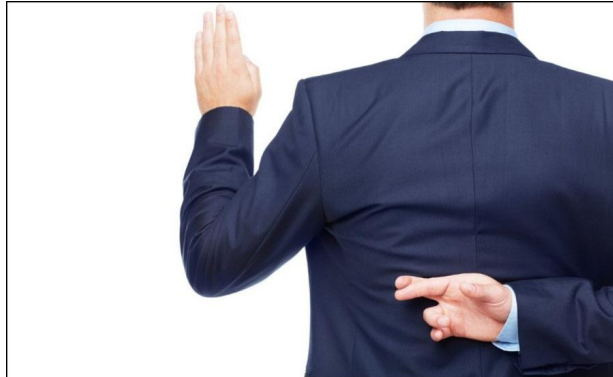
The Challenge

While it is important in today's business environment to be able to recognize and effectively deal with the bully boss, it is imperative that organizations develop proven approaches for evaluating manager candidates, so they do not create the next bully boss.

The good news is that the best companies take the hiring of managers seriously and have rigorous processes in place to identify and select candidates that can perform the manager role ethically, while exemplifying manager best practices.

In light of the significant impact that managers have on employee and organizational performance, what steps can your company take to ensure that the managers you select have the requisite personality, skills and emotional

Cracks in the Code: Why Leadership Fails from Ethics, Not Intelligence



by Luis Alvarez
July 31, 2025

In boardrooms and on battlefields, we tend to equate leadership with intelligence. Strategy, credentials, vision, these are the traits we lionize. But when leadership collapses, it's rarely because a leader wasn't smart enough. It's because they weren't strong enough, morally.

Leadership doesn't fail due to a lack of brains. It fails because of a breach in character.

From the Navy to the Corporate World: A Pattern Emerges

In my time as a Naval Officer, I witnessed firsthand that catastrophic failures weren't typically born of poor judgment, but of poor integrity. Leaders with all the right qualifications sometimes lost their way because they made self-serving, unethical choices under pressure.

This same theme plays out across the private sector. Consider the recent collapse of leadership at Astronomer, a promising tech company, undone by the actions of its CEO and Chief HR Officer. Their downfall wasn't for lack of capability or vision. It was because they ignored basic ethical boundaries, harming careers, reputations, and the very company they were supposed to serve.

These aren't isolated incidents. They are symptoms of a broader erosion.

A Historical Flaw or a Modern Crisis?

Leadership compromised by ethics is not a new story. Caesar, Napoleon, Nixon, Jeffrey Skilling (Enron), and Elizabeth Holmes (Theranos), their brilliance was eclipsed by a deeper failure of principle.

What feels different today is the acceleration and normalization of these failures. Ethics are increasingly treated as a luxury, not a necessity. The rise of

individualism has further diluted our sense of collective and personal responsibility. Leaders are encouraged to “build their brand,” chase shareholder approval, or trend on social media, all at the expense of service and accountability.

Why This Might Get Worse Before It Gets Better

Three forces are compounding this moral drift:

1. **Collapse of Institutional Anchors.** Institutions that once instilled a moral code, military ethos, community traditions, civic duty, love of country, and professional oaths are being devalued and losing influence. Many leaders are navigating without a compass.
2. **Metrics Over Morals.** When everything is reduced to KPIs and short-term gains, ethics often get treated as "nice to have" instead of "non-negotiable."
3. **Image Supersedes Integrity.** In a digital age, visibility is confused with credibility. Leaders are rewarded for style over substance, charisma over conscience.

The Path Forward: Courage and Character

This crisis of leadership will only be resolved when we stop elevating people based solely on intellect or ambition and start promoting those with demonstrated ethical resilience.

Character must be evaluated, trained, and reinforced. Not in an annual HR seminar, but as a central pillar of leadership development.

We also need to reframe what leadership is, not a power move, but a moral commitment.

Final Thought

Leadership is not a test of intelligence; it is a test of character, one that can be developed and must be maintained. The smartest person in the room can still lead us off a cliff if their moral compass is broken.

Whether we hold titles or not, our actions influence others. That makes each of us a leader. And as leaders, mentors, and citizens, we must return to the moral and ethical foundations that elevate humanity, because our future may well depend on it.

Our Offerings Include The Following:

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Seventeen Gorman Advisors offers a wide range of services to improve individual and organizational performance

Skill Building Programs

Seventeen Gorman Advisors is pleased to offer a range of programs that are designed to develop competencies

and support achievement of goals.

and enhance skills.

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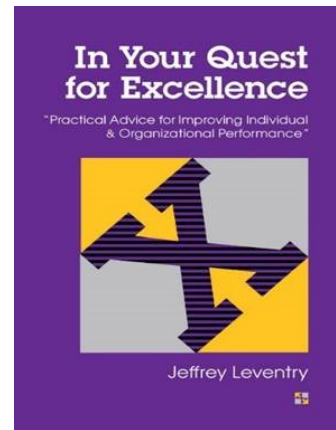
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looks forward to collaborating with you.
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