

Behaviors and Traits of Best Bosses

November 6, 2015 by [Kevin Sheridan](#)



One of my most popular blogs this year was [19 Ways to be a Bad Boss](#). So I thought it would be equally as valuable to outline behaviors and traits of a Best Boss as well.

As fortune would have it, I discovered a fascinating leadership study conducted by Lead Well LLC in partnership with Chicago-based Vantage Leadership Consulting. The 2013 study identified **five common traits of a Best Boss**:

Leads From a Higher Purpose – The Best Boss demonstrates a purpose beyond self-interest and self-profit and/or a purpose beyond the organization that is put into action on behalf of the individual.

Activates Potential – The Best Boss observes values, acknowledges and takes steps to activate the present capability and future potential of the individual.

Grants Autonomy – The Best Boss imparts knowledge, business acumen, big picture thinking, and establishes clear expectations to create an autonomous space for the individual to perform.

Provides Pervasive Feedback – The Best Boss doesn't miss an opportunity to provide constructive and reinforcing feedback.

Encourages Risk Taking To Drive Continual Learning – The Best Boss fuels reasonable risk-taking by allowing mistakes in an effort to promote continual learning, growth and development.

While each of these behaviors are powerful on their own, the study analysis noted that Best Bosses naturally integrate each of these behaviors in a systematic way to engage, motivate, develop and drive better performance from their direct reports.

The study also uncovered the **eight most common personality characteristics of Best Bosses**:

1. Humble, unassuming and authentic (This was also at the top of the list in Harvard University Professor and former Medtronic CEO Bill George's awesome book on leadership, *True North*)
2. Respectful
3. Bright and very smart
4. Positive, optimistic, "can do" attitude
5. Fair and ethical
6. Demonstrates a sense of humor; fun
7. Thoughtful and thorough
8. Competent