

## ***It's All About You***

In his book “Good Boss, Bad Boss: How to Be the Best...and Learn from the Worst,” Robert I. Sutton reminds us that there are important emotional elements to leading people, and that some leadership qualities are more important than others. One of the more telling qualities, he says, is an acute sense of self-awareness.

This is certainly true for pride-builders. If they didn't understand how others perceived and responded to them, they couldn't hope to frame their actions in ways that motivate and energize their followers emotionally as well as rationally. Pride-builders are experts at engaging the emotional commitment of employees. They do this with a laser-like focus on making their people feel good about the work they do.

If you are a manager, your success depends on staying in tune with how others think, feel, and react to you. Managers who persistently promote performance and humanity devote considerable energy to reading and responding to followers' feelings and actions, and those of other key players like superiors, peers, and customers. Of course, there is no single magical or simple thing that defines a great manager. The moves that great managers make are too complex, varied, messy, and unpredictable to be captured by any single theme, slogan, or set of steps.

Yet some skills and aspirations are more important than others. Developing and sustaining self-awareness ought to be at the top of the list for every manager.

The best managers reduce the risk of self-delusion by seeking and responding to hints and hard data about how others read their moods and moves. They urge followers to challenge them with enlightening and disconcerting questions. They want their followers to keep feeding them such information, no matter how unpleasant and unflattering, because they are obsessed with how their words and deeds are interpreted by others.

The upshot is, to be a great manager, you've got to think and act as if “it is all about you.” Your success depends on being fixated on yourself. On the surface, this conclusion clashes with advice from many experts. Former GE CEO Jack Welch used to implore managers, “It's not about you.” While Sutton agrees with the spirit of this advice, as the aim is to discourage bosses from falling prey to their most selfish and destructive instincts, he questions the words because most managers, like most human beings, are remarkably self-obsessed — and that isn't necessarily a bad thing. The best managers focus on controlling their moods and moves, accurately interpreting their impact on others, and making adjustments on the fly because they want their people to produce work that others will admire — and to feel respect and dignity along the way.