

"I'm in charge!" Leadership Flaws

Many bosses think that their strongest management tool is wielding the power that comes with the title, but there are more effective ways to lead. In their book, *Being the Boss: The 3 Imperatives for Becoming a Great Leader*, co-authors Linda A. Hill and Kent Lineback discuss the flaws of "I'm in charge!" leadership.

Most people think that power and authority are what ultimately make a boss effective. Hill and Lineback believe that this is not necessarily the case. Bosses that view their jobs in this way tend to monopolize discussions with their staff. That limits the opportunity for others to express their ideas and tells them, in effect, "your ideas are less important than mine."

However, power or authority isn't necessarily to blame. What really matters is how the people who possess authority view it. In the authors' research and experience, they've seen that many bosses think it's the best way to get others to do what needs to be done. Though they might not use the words outright, their message is clear: "Do what I say because I'm the boss. I'm in charge."

Conventional wisdom may suggest that the key tool of influence is the power or formal authority that comes with the title. But if a boss bases his efforts on that false wisdom, they are less likely to be effective than they want, need, and could be.

But if relying on formal authority isn't the best way to influence others, what is? The authors suggest that all sources of influence, other than coercion, are built on trust -- the confidence people have that their boss will do the right thing. Even authority ultimately depends on trust.

People's trust in their boss consists of two key components: competence and character. People believe you're competent when they think you know what to do and how to do it. People believe in your character when they understand and have confidence in your intentions, your values and standards. Competence alone won't get you far if people don't know or have confidence in you. Authority and power won't elicit from people the care and commitment that good work demands. Trust will. If people don't trust you, almost nothing you do or say will matter. Being an effective manager and leader begins with people's belief in your competence and character.

There is no question that an "I'm the boss!" approach is called for in certain situations, usually in times of crisis when people need a strong, directive voice. Most of the time, though, your club of power and authority is best kept on the shelf, where it's visible but seldom used.