

6 signs you're too nice of a boss

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(MoneyWatch) A good leader not only has great knowledge and insight, but the softer people skills to utilize them. Still, for every manager there's a fine line between being empathetic and friendly and being a feckless pushover.

"The big issue [especially] for new managers is that they don't understand the difference between 'business personal' relationships and pure personal relationships," says management psychologist Karissa Thacker. These two relationship may look similar on the surface, but there are important distinctions, she adds. "Imagine a golf outing...You are the boss and one of the team members is getting a divorce. An appropriate business personal conversation would include saying, 'I am sorry and I know that is a tough transition.' A purely personal interaction might get into a cheating spouse and the nitty-gritty details, like a reality show."

It's difficult to be a friend and an effective boss -- the boss loses objectivity and the employee may lose respect. To better draw the appropriate boundaries and become a better leader, be aware of these six signs that you're being too nice as a manager.

1. Deadlines are regularly missed. If you're the last to know that an assignment is going to be late, that's a red flag that you need to be firmer, Thacker says. Another sure signal: "Your direct reports cancel or move meetings with you without a reason, like serious illness." Your staff should report to you -- not the other way around.

2. You're the butt of jokes. Ronald Kaufman, author of a book about [personal achievement](#), says a boss shouldn't constantly be on the receiving end of sarcasm. If you hear a light-hearted joke or two where you're the punch-line, it might show that employees feel comfortable around you. But if you're constantly being put down, you're clearly not being respected.

3. Your input is ignored. What happens when you give criticism? Is it acknowledged, and with or without protest? If someone offers no reaction at all, they're basically ignoring you, and that's a huge sign you're not being effective, says Collette Ellis, principal of corporate training firm InStep Consulting. Also, if you find yourself avoiding giving feedback, you may have lost the ability to be objective.

4. You're sharing too much info. If you're spending half your day explaining yourself to subordinates, you're wasting your time, and possibly undermining your own authority. "If you begin to feel the need to over-explain your decisions by compromising sensitive management-level information to reason with your team or to justify your choices, your potency as a leader fails," says executive life coach Stephanie Somanchi.

5. You're always sharing credit. Being a team player is important, but you also need to take your credit when it's due. "Some leaders feel the need to share their accomplishments with their department or team," says John M. McKee, career coach and founder of The Business Success Coach Network. "While this can be great for the team's morale and helps to showcase their contributions, it can backfire on the leader if others fail to see that you are capable of great accomplishments yourself." Your superiors need to know that you're the one driving the team to success.

6. You're treated like a pal. It's important to understand the difference between someone having good rapport with you and being friendly, and someone being a friend. "This can include walking or dropping into your office without appointments, taking extra long lunches, leaving work early or showing up for work late, expressing unsolicited opinions on management topics, engaging you and others in 'water cooler' talk about people at work, and distracting from work time," says Lisa Quast, founder of consulting firm Career Woman.

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