

# How To Find a Good Boss

*By Marilyn Haight*

Whether you get hired for a new job, promoted, or reassigned to a new position, you will most likely have a new boss. Each time that happens, you must develop a new professional relationship with the person you rely on for direction, development, and future advancement. You need to quickly determine if this new boss is a good match for you and your career goals. But how can you tell? Try these five questions.

**1. Does your boss showcase your work?** If you're not sure, you could ask him, "What leadership opportunities will I have in my job?" If he says something like, "There's only one leader here -- me," you may have what I call a "Suppressor Boss." A boss who replies, "We're all leaders here; you'll be in charge of projects that need your expertise," will have no problem appreciating your role and contribution.

**2. Does your boss solve problems?** Try asking, "How should I escalate problems to you when I think you need to get involved?" If she insists you must solve your issue alone, then she could be a "Confounder Boss" who ignores problems, which makes them worse. A good boss might say, "Give me detailed examples; I'll determine the cause and work with managers at my level to correct the issues."

**3. Does your boss let you complete your work?** When in doubt, try asking him or her when you can start handling tasks from start to finish. If the answer is, "I'm a hands-on manager; we do everything as a team," you've got trouble. This is a "Player Boss" who does parts of your job he likes and leaves problems for you. If you hear, "Tell me when you think you're ready; I'll give you guidelines and be available only when you need me," you'll know your boss trusts your skills.

**4. Does your boss listen to your suggestions?** If not, tell her that when she cuts you off you wonder if she values your opinion. A reply like, "I have the final word," could mean she's a "Manipulator Boss." A good boss will say something like, "I'm sorry, I wasn't aware I was doing that. Please bring it to my attention next time it happens." A good boss always listens attentively.

**5. Does your boss treat you and your co-workers equally?** If you notice preferential treatment among your co-workers, try asking your boss, "What measurements will you use to evaluate my job performance?" If he says, "Every case is different; I use my judgment," he could be a "Dumbfounder Boss" who uses the wrong measures to evaluate job performance. A better answer, like, "Your work will be evaluated according to the documented standards we've already agreed upon," will signal your boss's fairness.

Listening skills, problem-solving, a sense of fairness, and an ability to trust are just some of the hallmarks of a good boss. A good employee will learn to spot and appreciate those attributes, and then move toward building a mutually successful relationship.