

STRATEGIES FOR TAMING A MICROMANAGING BOSS

Summary: Learn how to deal with your micromanaging boss in this article.



Question: My boss is micromanaging me to death! I'm a bright and capable person with an M.B.A. from a top-20 business school. Though I realize that my boss's actions reflect his style, and aren't necessarily a reflection on me, the situation is demoralizing. I feel as if I'm not given the responsibility, authority, and freedom I need to do my job. How can I approach my boss to deal with this without alienating him?

Answer: "Boss management" is one of those critical topics that is conspicuously absent from the M.B.A. curriculum. My hunch is that you're among the key talent that companies are desperately trying to retain, while your micromanaging boss is inadvertently sending you in the other direction.

It's not unusual during the first few months of a job for managers to hover rather closely as new hires settle into their roles, but it looks as if you're seeing no signs of relief. This bad situation may deteriorate further if you don't attempt to nip it in the bud. A direct, but diplomatic, discussion with your boss is in order. If micromanaging is his style, there are ways to work with him, but you may have to adapt, too.

Before talking with your manager, conduct a reality check to avoid surprise accusations that might put you on the defensive. Have you delivered in all performance areas? Have you progressed at the rate your boss expected? Are your expectations in line with the demands of your position? Is your development timeline in sync with the organization's timeline? Review these questions with a trusted colleague or mentor within the company.

Approach the discussion with a win-win attitude, truly seeking common ground. Ask for a meeting to review your progress. Keep it private and be sure it's at a time that's good for him (not in the middle of a huge project or when he's dashing out the door). Early in the meeting, clarify his expectations. Explain that you are wondering about his confidence in you, based on his level of involvement in your work. Inquire about when you will gain more responsibility and independence with your assignments. Describe your style, how you work best, the arrangement you'd like to work toward and the positive outcome you anticipate.

Recognizing your boss's need to know, suggest periodic status updates that you can provide in writing or in person. Between reports, tell him that you expect to work independently, and assure him that you will contact him if you need anything. Beyond this, you can seek assistance from the human-resources department. But if he's unwilling or unable to get the message and let go a little, he probably is a control freak, and you should move on before he drains all of your precious energy.

See [Set Necessary Boundaries with Your Boss](#) for more information.