

21 Characteristics of poor managers

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Have you heard of the statement “*People leave their managers not their jobs?*” Research has shown that is the reason certain people have left or intend to leave certain jobs, and I am sure it is probably the reason why you left your former job, right? Research has also shown that a majority of people leave their jobs not because they do not like the work they do, but because they do not get along with their Boss. The major reason cited in [exit interviews](#) is the relationship they have with their line manager. Because of *poor management skills*, some managers are seen as the ‘worst boss’.

Some managers fail to lead not because they do not have what it takes to lead but because they possess *poor management skills*. Nevertheless, what makes them so bad? Turns out, there are quite a few qualities that many of the worst bosses have in common:

Related: [Qualities to look for when hiring a manager](#)

Characteristics of Poor Managers

According to LaMarco (2019), poor managers have the following common characteristics:

1. Micromanagement and Excessive Oversight

A manager who [micromanages](#) might stand over employees’ shoulders as they work or check on employees every minute, wanting to know what they are working on or how they are working. Employees are regarded employees as cogs in a machine instead of as members of a team who share a common goal – to get the job done. Positive recognition and appreciation go much further than micromanagement, which results in a lack of trust. People work best when managers trust them.

2. Poor Communication and Decision Making

A manager needs to be able to state what’s necessary to get the job done. This means that managers need to set the expectations for the job, set the procedures, make decisions, and then monitor and enforce these fairly throughout the team. If a manager cannot express decisions clearly, then nothing is accomplished or what’s accomplished is not done well. This leaves employees with a vague sense of purpose and employees might be performing the same task in different ways.

3. Stubbornness and Unwillingness to Listen and Adapt

A manager who is unwilling to listen to feedback and adapt to change isn't a manager who will lead a thriving team. A willingness to evolve has always been important for business – especially now because technology moves forward faster than ever before. Managers need to [listen to employees'](#) suggestions and be honest about where the company needs to go.

4. Not Making Productive Use of Employees

Getting to know people at the business generates a sense of goodwill, which improves morale and enables a manager to gauge each person's strengths. Managers cannot know the skills and talents of those who've been hired until the employees are seen in action. Watching employees and then creating an atmosphere in which employees feel comfortable giving feedback will foster business growth.

5. Bad Attitude or Lack of Honesty

A company's upper management sets the tone for the rest of the employees. When management has a bad attitude or they don't seem to be honest in their dealings with employees, that creates toxicity, and nobody wants to work in a [toxic environment](#).

According to a business blog known as Coach Potatoes, the following are also characteristics of *Poor management*:

Related: [Toxic Managers-How to manage one](#)

6. Too much focus on the task and not the individuals

If a manager has too much focus on the achievement of a task they tend to disregard the individuals involved in helping achieve a said task. Their behavior is impersonal, they do not tend to have any interest in how their people are feeling, and praise recognition, and encouragement are in short supply. This often leaves employees feeling undervalued.

7. Not enforcing standards

People need to have a clear understanding of their roles and expectations, and it is equally important that having defined the standards that are expected, these are enforced. Too often, a *poor manager* will fail to take the appropriate action when standards are not met and this then sends the message that the standards are not important or relevant.

8. Lack of feedback – positive and negative

If you do not take the time to tell people how they are doing, how will they know if they are meeting expectations? If they receive regular timely feedback, they will have a greater understanding of what they need to do to achieve their objectives, be it a continuance of current behavior or correction in their activity.

9. Using communication on a need-to-know basis only

Another sign of *poor management* is keeping employees in the dark about issues that have a potential bearing on their role in the organization. If plans and other areas of the business are treated as secrets not to be shared with other departments, how can staff gain an understanding of how they can play an effective part in the achievement of company goals?

10. Making decisions and then asking for feedback

Poor managers will view their role to be the one to have all the answers and to hand, the decisions made down to the workforce. If the decisions are being made from the top, down what is the point in asking those on the ground floor for their thoughts? If the decisions have already been made what difference will it make if they think it is a good idea or not?

11. Shifting the blame

The [art of good management](#) means taking responsibility when it is due and allowing others to take the credit when it is deserved. Poor managers look to point the finger of blame away from them at every opportunity, this only has short-term benefits for the manager, as their limitations are soon identified.

12. No sense of humor

A sense of humor is a vital element in the makeup of [successful managers](#), it indicates you are working for someone who is in control, someone who is relaxed, and someone confident in achieving success. It does not prevent you from being professional as there are a time and a place to laugh, and a time and a place to fully focus on achieving objectives, but a little lightness goes a long way.

In addition to the above, Ben Karr a LinkedIn influencer also lists the following as characteristics of *poor managers*:

Related: [The Benefits of Laughing in the Workplace](#)

13. Play favorites

You might be on better terms with one employee over the others outside the office, but inside, it is important to treat everyone equally.

14. Suffering from narcissism

With poor managers, it is all about them — how employees' work reflects on them, and how someone's problems or successes will affect them.

15. Use fear as motivation

If your goal as a manager is for your team to fear you, you are going about it all wrong. You should not have to use fear or intimidation to get things done.

16. Take credit for successes that are not solely theirs

Ever found out later that a boss took credit for your work or ideas? Yeah, it does not feel good at all. Do not do that.

17. Lack of vision

When the leader lacks vision, the team lacks direction, and that can be incredibly frustrating for a [team member](#).

18. Do not mean what they say

These bosses may praise you to your face, but you know in your heart that they do not mean it. You cannot trust these managers at all.

19. Tolerate mediocrity

Nearly as bad as expecting the impossible is the manager who tolerates mediocrity or worse. If one team member can get away with anything while the others pull their weight, it is going to cause resentment.

In a survey conducted by SHRM in 2016, the following were common traits of poor managers:

20. Focus on the negative

More than half (56 percent) said their bad boss only noticed negative things about the workers' performance, never the positives.

21. Care less about their staff

Almost half of the respondents (45 percent) said they considered their supervisor to be a bad boss because he or she cared only about themselves, not about their staff.

In Gallup's 2015 State of the American Manager report, one out of two professionals surveyed said they had quit a job at some point in their career to "get away" from their boss.

Effects of *Poor Management* in an organization?

When a business is managed poorly, this ineffectiveness resonates throughout the organization. It takes an especially heavy toll on employee morale, resulting in inferior work from workers who would often rather be engaged and productive but have inadequate incentive to perform optimally because their

efforts will not be recognized or rewarded.

Ineffective management increases [employee turnover](#), especially alienating the workers you would most like to keep – those who care about their work and can easily find employment elsewhere because of their experience and work ethics. Unnecessary turnover costs your business because you need to devote the resources to hiring and training new staff who may also be unlikely to stay in the same difficult managers are supervising them. Conversely, *poor managers* waste opportunities by assigning the wrong job responsibilities to the wrong staff, hindering productivity, and creating bottlenecks. (Gartenstein, 2018)

How to deal with poor managers?

“In any situation in life, you only have three options. You always have three options. You can change it, you can accept it, or you can leave it. What is not a good option is to sit around wishing you would change it but not changing it, wishing you would leave it but not leaving it, and not accepting it. It’s that struggle, that aversion, that is responsible for most of our misery.” — Neil Ravikant, Tools of Titans.

So how can one deal with a poor manager or boss with *poor [management skills](#)*? According to Heathfield (2020), start by understanding that your boss may not know that he or she is a bad boss. Just as in [situational leadership](#), the definition of bad depends on the employee's needs, the manager's skills, and the circumstances of the situation. A hands-off manager may not realize that their failure to provide any direction or feedback makes them a bad boss. Your boss may think he or she is empowering the staff. A manager who provides too much direction and micromanages may feel insecure and uncertain about their job. This boss may not realize their direction is insulting to a competent, secure, self-directed staff member.

The following are ways Heathfield (2020) recommends when dealing with a bad manager:

1. Start by recognizing that you have the right to a professional environment in your workplace. You are not a problem. You have a bad boss. The bad boss is the problem. You need to deal with them.
2. Talk to this boss. Tell the boss what you need to succeed in terms of direction, feedback, and support. Be polite and focus on your needs. You need to tell the boss exactly what you need from them. Telling the boss that he or she is a bad boss is counterproductive and will not help you meet your goals.
3. Ask the manager how you can help them reach the goals they want to achieve. Make sure you listen well and provide the needed assistance he requests.
4. Seek a mentor from among other managers or more skilled peers, with the full knowledge and cooperation of your current manager, to enlarge your opportunity for experience.
5. If you have taken these actions, and they have not worked, go to your boss’s manager and ask for assistance. Alternatively, you can go to your Human Resources first, to rehearse and gain advice. Understand that your current boss may never forgive you, so ensure that you have done what you can do with your boss, before taking your issues up the line.
6. If nothing changes, despite your best efforts, and you think the problem is that they do not

believe you, draw together coworkers who also experience the behavior. Visit the boss' manager to share the size and impact of the behavior.

7. If you think the problem is that your boss can not—or will not—change, ask for a transfer to another department. This recommendation presumes that you like your employer and your work. If not, [job searching](#) may be your next best option.

Poor management can also be dealt with by doing the following according to Gartenstein (2018):

1. If there is someone within your business with the authority and reach to take steps toward better management, you can either replace the manager who is causing difficulty or address the problem through guidance or training.
2. That manager may benefit from a firm but insightful conversation with a higher-level manager who layout the issue can clearly and even model good management behavior by instructing without criticizing too harshly.
3. An organization can also address bad management issues by hiring better managers in the first place. Learn to identify red flags.
4. Training is also invaluable in averting management pitfalls and reinforcing best practices. An organization can develop a training program that covers everything from interpersonal dynamics to organizing workflow.

The effects of bad management are harder to pin down. Even with an awful boss, employees may suck it up to protect their jobs. *Poor management* does have harmful effects, ranging from lost productivity to losing employees. It's important to fix the problems before the staff quits in frustration.

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