



Pippa's advice on... Working for a Micro Manager

I've been working as a freelance PA for many years now, often on short contracts. With every new contract comes a new boss and over the years I have noticed that most bosses tend to fall into one of four different categories.

There are the 'power' bosses. This type of manager or boss is quite common. They're the sort who quite enjoys throwing their corporate weight around; making sure no one is under any illusion as to who is in charge. It follows that people who have risen to the top are likely to be assertive, go getting and driven and power bosses are certainly all of these things. Power bosses are usually good at their job and can be both manageable, interesting and inspiring, on the proviso that you are doing your job effectively. Power bosses struggle to like anyone whose work ethic and output they don't respect. So, if you are good at what you do, fairly tough and prepared to pander to their ego occasionally, you'll be fine working for a power boss. Otherwise you're stuffed. In short, they're not for the faint hearted.

Then there's the 'dream' boss. This type of boss is sadly quite a rare breed. Finding one is an utter joy and will transform your attitude to work completely. Dream bosses make work fun! They inspire and boost morale. Friday nights start to feel more like Sundays. You're not going to be in the office, feeding off your bosses incredible energy for a whole two days and by comparison weekends suddenly seem quite boring. In fact, find yourself assisting a dream boss and you'll probably feel like you could happily spend the rest of your working life looking after them. Only, the trouble is, they're so fair and rewarding that you end up doing brilliantly under their guidance, leaving them with no choice but to promote you (thus hoisted by their own fairness and brilliance). Dream bosses will influence you in many different, positive ways.

The other end of the scale is the 'mystery' boss, the mystery being that no one can really understand how they ever came to be in charge. They make strange decisions, lack people skills and have a tendency to undermine and discourage. When a mystery boss is in charge, often a quite revolutionary atmosphere creeps into the office. Being at work will start to remind you of being in the playground as a divisive mood slowly permeates the building. The only upside is that a mystery boss will often end up being 'replaced,' or you will leave, having decided that life is too short to work for someone so irritating.

Lastly, there is the 'control freak' boss, or, to put it another way, the 'micro manager'. This type can be the hardest of all to crack. My first experience of working for a micro manager rendered me so exhausted I needed a two week holiday in Tenerife to recover. It had been a relatively short contract so I got over the ordeal quite quickly but the next time I started a job and sniffed out that my new boss was a micro manager, I panicked. Could I cope with another one?

There was only one thing for it; I had to come up with some strategies. I did exactly that and, over time, we settled into a reasonably OK working relationship. So, for those of you who might one day end up working for, a micro manager boss (or perhaps you already do) here come some tips –

Get in there quick!

Micro managers spend a large portion of their day composing lists of things for you to do. To the point where you will wonder how they manage to fit all the things *they* should be doing into their schedule. They will write list upon list to the most patronising degree, then spend the rest of the day chasing you to see which of the tasks you've completed. So, speed is of the essence. If you can work fast and efficiently this will reassure the micro manager greatly. To some degree micro managers are just nervous individuals who are also terrible delegators. Without realising it themselves they are testing you at the beginning of the 'getting to know you' process. Anxious creatures they can't imagine anybody else being able to do things as well as them, or in the manner they want it done. So, rise to the challenge of an initiation process. Get stuff done super speedily

so they are impressed and perhaps even taken aback. At this point they will hopefully calm down and back off!

Anticipate

Micro managers can be very repetitive. Maybe there's a task you do every single week without fail. Well, a micro manager won't assume you have it covered despite you having done it 580 times already. They will genuinely worry that if they don't say anything it won't get done. So, if a regular task like this exists, pre-empt, get it done early then surprise them by announcing that it's already been taken care of before they've had the chance to ask. This sounds like a bit of an exhausting way to work but it won't be forever. With a micro manager it's about lulling them into a non- false, completely justified sense of security.

Give it Time

A micro manager is capable of calming down; it just might take a while. They find it hard to trust. However, if you can stick with them and reach the point where they can see how dependable you are, they have the capacity to end up being extremely loyal.

Check yourself

If a boss is asking you every five seconds if you've done XY or Z, it might be worth having a small time of reflection. After all, it's all very well me blaming everything on the exacerbating culture of 'over the top micro-management' but what if (and I'm just playing devil's advocate here), they're not OTT managers at all. What if instead you've just been letting things slide a bit lately and are actually in grave danger of losing your job if you don't get more on top of things? If that were the case then by writing this I would have unwittingly provided you with a scapegoat. So, just have a think. Ask yourself is it me? I'm sure it isn't, but worth a check.....

Communicate, communicate, communicate

Micro managers are the way they are because they're the kind of people who need to know and indeed hear that everything is being taken care of. SO TELL THEM. Take the time to drop them a quick daily email to say that this, that and the other has been taken care of. Plus, if you're across something but it's on a back burner for some perfectly good reason, just explain. They will be very grateful for the update.

The more you tell a micro manager, the more they will leave you alone. And that is the secret to working for one. For them, life is one big massive to do list. Create a task, action the task, tick it off the list. This is how a micro manager likes to operate. In a nutshell, more is more with the micro manager, so don't hold back.

Good luck my fellow PA warriors,

Pippa x