**MANAGING YOUR BOSS – Part 2 CULTURAL ASPECTS**

What makes a good Boss? The fundamentals of sound judgment, integrity, and people skills are universal. The complete makeup of an excellent Boss will have some culture-specific elements that need to be considered when managing your Boss.

Cultures differ in their understanding and beliefs of what the qualities the Boss need’s to demonstrate and to be measured as good leaders. You will probably never experience again the quality of leadership that you experienced as a Tiger. Certain behaviours and styles can be an asset or a weakness; good leadership can be thought of as *personality in the right place*.

The decision making and communication style can be influenced by the geographical region and origin of the Boss. The attitudes towards decision taking can vary from strongly top-down to strongly consensual. Also reactions to authority range from remarkably egalitarian to extremely hierarchical.

In these four cultures of leadership making a distinction between attitudes toward authority and attitudes toward decision will help in understanding your Boss in a global context. Countries are broadly scattered across the two dimensions within the four quadrants illustrated:



Bosses as leaders can be categorised as follows:

* **Synchronized Leaders**

Often regarded as leadership material in regions such as China, South Korea, Japan, Indonesia, Thailand, the UAE, and much of Latin America. Rising in the ranks, such leaders require to seek consensus on decisions and drive colleagues and stakeholders through an in-depth process. As a result, business cycles can be extended. However, when the stakeholders are onboard, the agreement must to close fast or risk being jeopardized. This type of leader is typically prudent and focused on potential threats rather than rewards.

* **Opportunistic Leaders**

In Europe, those many Bosses self-initiate and demonstrate flexibility in goal achievement. This includes the UK, and countries where the UK had considerable cultural influence such as the U.S., Australia, and New Zealand, and Asian countries that based their governing and economic institutions on the British model. Some of these leaders thrive on ambiguity and can be less individualistic. However, frequent alignment with team members is often used to ensure all keep up as plans evolve and change. Opportunistic leaders tend to be ambitious risk takers.

* **Communication Style**

In specific regions leaders are expected to be direct. In Asia and countries like the Netherlands, excessive communication is less appealing in the leadership. Often, people need the Boss to get directly to the point. As a result, a Boss who is a task-focused leader is preferred. Spur-of-the-moment performance reviews with managers occur more often as leaders address undesirable behaviour’s from their team as they happen. The Boss who adopts the direct approach can be less interpersonally sensitive.

* **The Diplomatic Leader**

In New Zealand, Sweden, Canada, and much of Latin America communication finesse and careful messaging are essential not just in relationships but also in career progression. Many employees prefer a Boss who is able to keep business conversations pleasant and friendly. Empathy is required in constructive confrontation. Audience reactions need to be continuously assessed during negotiations and meetings. Executives of this type regulate their messaging to maintain an easy-going connection; direct communication is seen as unnecessarily harsh.

The Dark-Side…

* **Leading by Kiss Up – Kick Down**

In a company where rank is emphasised, individual coping skills are developed by leaders. The Boss’s job is to execute directives passed down the chain of command with lower ranking employees. This can lead to a “Kiss Up - Kick Down” leadership style, with polite and flattering behaviour towards those superiors the Boss answers to, but abusive and even bullying to subordinates. Although a negative leadership style, it is tolerated more in certain countries, such as Western Asia. The “Kiss Up - Kick Down” leader is diligent and compliant with their Bosses but domineering and hard on their team.

* **Passive-Aggressive Leaders**

Some Bosses develop cynicism over time, and become mistrusting, and eventually underhandedly resistant to change, especially when under stress. Reactions such as these can occur when the Boss is forced to pursue an objective in the absence of sound rationale. Openly cooperative whilst maintaining scepticism can hinder execution. Indonesia and Malaysia often have leadership styles like this. A passive-aggressive Boss is usually one that is critical and resentful. Paradoxically, this Boss’s aversion to conflict often generates conflict.

The attitudes toward authority have changed with the abandoning of hierarchical management processes for a more facilitative, egalitarian approach. Command-and-control has been substituted with empowerment. Many managers no longer give direct orders to their team and now use “management by objective,” open-door policies, and 360-degree feedback. Addressing the Boss by name rather than their title is normal. The hierarchy has been dissolved, and management by going “walkabout” amongst the staff and having impromptu discussions has become empowerment and inclusiveness.

The approaches to authority and decision making are not the only ways in which cultures differ, but in the context of leadership are important. And if international managers confound the two, they will make mistakes in adapting their leadership styles to the cultures and situations at hand.

It is assumed that in hierarchical societies, decisions will be made at the top by the boss, and egalitarian cultures reach conclusions by group consensus. Globally, hierarchies and decision-making methods are not always connected.

It is possible to adjust to the leadership style of the Boss. It can require considerable effort to go against one's predispositions. However, it’s important to take into account the culture of the Boss. Successful leaders inevitably redefine culture to be a reflection of themselves.

With the nuances and complexities of different approaches understood, a smart approach to cross-cultural interactions with the Boss can be successful. Also, consider choosing to explain your approach to a proposal or idea and ask the Boss to adapt to you. It can also be more productive to adjust to the cultural norms of the Boss rather than expecting the Boss to adapt.

The Boss may be a successful leader in their own culture, in expecting to manage and engage a Boss a multifaceted approach is required to understand their culture. It’s a small world, and it is not enough to know how to lead in the ways of different cultures. Make a conscious decision on how to adapt to the Boss (or not) to get the results you require.

Hopefully, as a service leaving Tiger you are on the job ladder and hopefully it will be a success for you and yours. No matter how good the job, benefits, salary and collegues, you will need to get on with your boss. If he or she is a bad one, and there are a lot out there, work to improve them by the sort of good support and loyalty you provided your bosses in the regiment. If it’s a good boss, well none of them are ever perfect and they will still respond well to your support and loyalty.