

Direct Reports

by Sophia



WHAT'S COVERED

What does a good boss look like? Have you had bosses before that were good? Or perhaps some that were not so good? This tutorial will cover the topic of direct reports, focusing on an overview of how managers should interact with their direct reports. Our discussion breaks down as follows:

1. Caring About Direct Reports

A good manager takes care of direct reports, and not simply how they're doing at their jobs. The caring should extend to issues that affect their jobs and may not necessarily originate in the office. You play, as a manager, a big role in these people's lives. How many times do you hear people talking about their bosses at the dinner table, good or bad? As a boss, you'll be the subject of many conversations, and you'll likely spend more time with your direct reports than their spouses, in some cases. Therefore, it's important that whenever you get a chance to take care of your direct reports, you take that chance.

Caring about Direct Reports	Description
Show interest in not only in the work but also in their non-work lives.	What is it that drives them? What do they show interest in? What are they bringing to the worksite that originates elsewhere, that may be affecting their work?
Ask about their plans, problems, and desires.	What are their problems and desires? What do they want to do with their lives? By getting to know your people and caring about your direct reports, you can help them not only to be better employees for you but also to move up the career ladder towards their vision of success.
Be available to listen and to talk about personal problems.	As much as we like to think that we are adept at compartmentalizing and keeping the various parts of our lives separate, it's not always that way. Often, you may have direct reports that bring significant personal problems to the worksite. If you can be that receptive ear, you can help them get through those problems and get back on track as far as the job is concerned.
Be aware of the workloads and	Your people work and they work hard. It's always a good thing if the boss can take that extra time to appreciate the work, especially if your direct reports are putting in the extra

reward extra effort.	effort. Set aside the time to say a simple thank you--sometimes that's all it takes.
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2. Fairness to Direct Reports

Managers need to be fair to direct reports, obviously. Employees are more motivated when they see all staff is treated equally. Managers can't have favorites.

Fairness to Direct Reports	Description
Treat all your direct reports equally and equitably.	Make sure that what you would do for one, you would do for everybody else, without picking favorites.
Act fairly when it comes to your direct reports.	Don't assign all of the bad jobs that nobody wants to do to one particular person. Spread them around and when people do a good job, let them know.
Have candid discussions with your employees and your direct reports.	When you talk to them, do so directly, without using flowery language to beat around the bush. Make sure that you can have a conversation where you get in there, talk about what you need to talk to them about, and then allow everybody to move on with their day. They're busy and you're busy, and sometimes you don't have time to dodge the issue.
Don't use ulterior motives.	This means no office politics. Using people as an ulterior motive, especially if a boss is using them for personal gain, is not very fair to the direct report, for one, and it's not going to be good for their productivity, either.

3. Confronting Direct Reports

Now, what about confronting direct reports? As discussed before, nobody is perfect, and people are going to mess up. You'll have direct reports who make mistakes. So, how do you handle those situations?

It's important that your direct reports understand that a good manager cares about their well being.

Confronting Direct Reports	Description
Deal with any problems firmly and in a timely manner.	Don't let problems sit and fester. The longer you let them fester, the more people are going to think that the behavior in question is acceptable in your workplace. And if it's not, you want to deal with it firmly and as soon as you find out about it.
Regularly	If they're doing a bad job or need to improve in some areas, let them know. However, don't simply come down on them and make them feel terrible. Instead, review their performance

review their performance.	in a manner so they understand the context of the problem and their part in it. They may not know that they have a problem; they may think they're doing a great job. It's your job to make sure that they know not only what improvements they need to make, but also what steps they can take to improve themselves.
Do not be overly afraid of making decisions that may, at first glance, be seen as negative by the direct reports.	There are certain situations where you're going to have to give an instruction or tell someone to do something that is simply not going to be very popular. The best thing you can do in this case is simply get in there and do it. They should already know that you care-- this is not the time to let them know that you care, because it should be evident before you ever have to make these difficult decisions. So, make sure that they understand it's not a personal issue, and what that negative decision means for the whole company. It's important that they understand where everyone's coming from and why the decision had to be made in the first place.



SUMMARY

Today we learned about **caring about direct reports**. We also learned about **fairness to direct reports**, and how to treat the people who report directly to you fairly. Lastly, we learned about **confronting direct reports** when you need to relay bad news regarding their performance.

Good luck!

Source: adapted from sophia instructor james howard