

How to Manage Being Micromanaged

My team and I were invited to a strategic business partner's corporate headquarters to think about what's possible and innovate. I viewed the trip as an excellent opportunity to retreat, bond as a team, and shape our future.

I approached my manager, Kevin, about the opportunity. He hesitated and then said, "Most trips like these are boondoggles. Do you think you're going to accomplish anything?"

"Yes, I do. I'm confident that we'll come back with fresh ideas and take our business to the next level," I replied.

Kevin said, "I have my doubts. I'll tell you what, put together a plan with specific objectives, and I'll take a look. If I agree with your proposal, I'll okay the trip."

"Great, and thanks. I'll come back to you shortly," I said.

Over the next few days, I collaborated with my team and business partner to develop a specific plan and desired outcome. Then, I shared it with Kevin. A chronic micromanager, he asked us to make multiple changes to the plan. Once the topics were aligned with Kevin's feedback, he begrudgingly agreed to let us go.

My team jumped into action and made the necessary coverage arrangements to ensure we could break away with limited distractions. We activated our email out-of-office messages notifying internal customers that we were out for a short time, and provided backup contact information.

The next day, we loaded the van and headed to our destination. My team was beaming with excitement and anticipation. They'd

been on trips like this before and understood our retreat's potential. As we drove, we connected on both personal and professional levels. We talked optimistically about how we could advance our vision of being industry leaders and indispensable partners.

When we arrived, we were escorted into our business partner's innovation lab, where all of the futuristic designs inspired us. Next, we moved into a creative thinking lab to begin formulating ideas and developing plans.

Then, the first email hit... And another... And another. A series of 10 or more emails from Kevin appeared on our iPhones within 30 minutes. He was following up on projects, providing feedback, and checking in... Just to let us know, he was there.

His last email's subject line read, "TURN OFF YOUR OUT-OF-OFFICE MESSAGE."

In the body of the email, Kevin wrote that having our out-of-office message turned on sent the wrong message to leadership and internal customers. It was our job to be accessible regardless of what we were doing or who was covering for us.

I thought to myself, "Ugh. Really? If that isn't micromanagement, I don't know what is!"

I looked around the room and saw discouragement, frustration, and anger on my team's faces. Some became distracted and anxious. Everyone began to mentally disengage from the creative thinking discussion.

During a break, I gathered my team to ask their thoughts about the emails. They told me they went to great lengths to ensure our time away would be productive and distraction-free. Kevin's micromanagement tendencies surfaced, and the team felt disenfranchised. They wondered if it was a mistake to take the trip.

I understood their concerns. I asked the team to return to the meeting and told them I'd gently respond to Kevin's emails. I asked them not to make a mountain out of a molehill and turn off the out-of-office messages. Lastly, I asked them to stay focused on the purpose of our meeting and ignore distractions.

The good news is that the team returned to the meeting and developed a visionary plan. Also, I ran interference by answering Kevin's emails and asking the team to turn off the out-of-office messages. By engaging Kevin on behalf of the team, I was able to assuage his need to feel in control. We didn't hear from him again during our trip.

Working Successfully with a Boss who Micro-Manages

Controlling bosses can slow you down and undermine your confidence. Maybe your supervisor second-guesses your decisions and expects you to be available 24/7.

Overbearing management styles are all too common and counterproductive. Most employees say they've been micro-managed at some point in their career, and studies show that workers perform worse when they feel like they're being watched.

If your boss is hovering over your shoulder, encourage them to give you more space. Try these steps to gain more freedom and still get along with your boss.

Steps to Take by Yourself

1. **Evaluate your performance.** ***Start by investigating whether you could be contributing to the situation.*** Do you show up on time and follow through on your responsibilities? Close supervision could be a rational response when an employee tends to be less than reliable.
2. **Be proactive.** Once you've assured yourself that you're on top of your work, you can focus on how to cope with

your boss's management style. ***Identify their anxiety triggers and figure out your plan of action in advance.***

3. **Coordinate with colleagues.** Chances are, your co-workers experience the same issues you do. Coordinate your efforts to show your boss that they can trust you to pull together to overcome challenges even while they're traveling or focusing on strategy.
4. **Document your activities.** Logging your accomplishments creates a paper trail. Having facts straight helps you prove your worth and maintain your peace of mind.
5. **Seek intervention.** When appropriate, you may be able to consult others without alienating your boss. If senior management asks for feedback, let them know your supervisor's good qualities in addition to changes that could help you do a better job. Your HR department or employee assistance program may also offer relevant advice.

Steps to Take with Your Boss

1. **Provide updates.** ***Frequent status reports keep your boss informed without their having to ask.*** Assure them that things are running smoothly.
2. **Create more opportunities.** Is your boss interfering with your work because they don't have a full plate of their own? Add value by presenting them with public speaking opportunities and sales leads. Helping your boss shine is a smart way to advance your career.
3. **Clarify your role.** Listen closely to your boss and observe their behavior. That way, you can understand their preferences and anticipate their needs. Maybe they like booking their travel arrangements. Perhaps they care more about employees following instructions than taking the initiative.
4. **Ask for feedback.** Find out what your boss is thinking. Ask questions about what results they're looking for and how you're measuring up. Pinpoint strengths you can

build on and changes that they would like to see.

5. **Communicate tactfully.** Speak about finding solutions rather than criticizing their personality or work habits. If there are conflicts that you want to confront, be direct and gentle.
6. **Give praise for progress.** Congratulations if you're making headway. *Reinforce positive interactions by letting your boss know how much you appreciate their efforts when you're allowed to take charge of a project or take your approach.* Tell them that you enjoy working with them and that they're helping you contribute more.
7. **Create a personal connection.** Respect and compassion enhance any working relationship. Remind yourself of what you like about your boss. Make time for small talk and sharing common interests. A strong foundation will make any disagreement easier to handle.

If you're working to live out your faith in the workplace, here are some other principles I recommend:

1. **Remember Who You're Working For.** If you keep your eyes on God and embrace that you're ultimately working for him, you'll maintain a positive attitude regardless of the circumstance. The Bible says, "Work willingly at whatever you do, as though you were working for the Lord rather than for people." (Colossians 3:23, NLT)
2. **Submission Is Key.** It's easy to work for a great boss. The hard part is working for and submitting to a bad one... But when you do, God is pleased. The Bible says, "You who are servants, be good servants to your masters—not just to good masters, but also to bad ones. What counts is that you put up with it for God's sake when you're maltreated for no good reason. There's no virtue in accepting punishment that you well deserve. But if you're maltreated for good behavior and continue despite it to be a good servant, that is what counts with God." (1 Peter 2:18–20, The Message)

3. **Bite Your Tongue.** I disciplined myself to communicate positively and not show irritation if I became frustrated. The Bible says, "A gentle answer deflects anger, but harsh words make tempers flare." (Proverbs 15:1, NLT)

Despite desperate circumstances, I grew leaps and bounds during the three years I worked with Kevin. I learned to cope with his management style in the short term. Eventually, I realized that Kevin's style and mine weren't compatible, the intense micro-management I experienced wasn't sustainable, and I decided to move into another role.

I challenge you to apply the above principles; if you do, you'll be able to manage being micromanaged.

Want to learn more about becoming the best version of yourself? Visit my website, prestonpoore.com, today!

Cheers,

Preston