

Here are some of the qualities of truly unforgettable bosses:

1. They believe the unbelievable.

Most people try to achieve the achievable; that's why most goals and targets are incremental rather than inconceivable. Memorable bosses expect more--from themselves and from others. Then they show you how to get there. And they bring you along for what turns out to be an unbelievable ride.

2. They see opportunity in instability and uncertainty.

Unexpected problems, unforeseen roadblocks, major crises--most bosses take down the sails, batten the hatches, and hope to wait out the storm. A few see a crisis as an opportunity. They know it's extremely difficult to make major changes, even necessary ones, when things are going relatively smoothly. They know reorganizing an entire sales team is accepted more easily when a major customer goes under. They know creating new sales channels is a lot easier when a major competitor enters the market. They know reorganizing manufacturing operations is a lot easier when the flow of supplies and components gets disrupted. Memorable bosses see instability and uncertainty not as a barrier but as an enabler. They reorganize, reshape, and reengineer to reassure, motivate, and inspire--and in the process make the organization much stronger.

3. They wear their emotions on their sleeves.

Good bosses are professional. Memorable bosses are highly professional and yet also openly human. They show sincere excitement when things go well. They show sincere appreciation for hard work and extra effort. They show sincere disappointment--not in others, but in themselves. They celebrate, they empathize, they worry. Sometimes they even get frustrated or angry.

In short, they're human. And, unlike many bosses, they act as if they know it. Professionalism is admirable. Professionalism--with a healthy blend of humanity--is inspiring.

4. They aren't afraid to ask for help.

Good bosses use their knowledge and experience to make decisions. After all, a key trait all great leaders possess is decisiveness. Unforgettable bosses don't think they know everything. Unforgettable bosses know what they know; they don't know what *you* know. So they ask. While that shows vulnerability, it also shows respect for other people's opinions and a willingness to listen--which are also qualities of a great leader.

5. They protect others from the bus.

Terrible bosses throw their employees under the bus. Good bosses never throw their employees under the bus. Memorable bosses see the bus coming and pull their employees out of the way, often without the employees knowing until much, much later, if ever--because memorable bosses never try to take credit. And if they can't, they take the hit. (And later speak privately to the employee in question.)

6. They've been there, done that, and *still* do that.

Dues aren't paid, past tense. Dues get paid each and every day. The true measure of value is the tangible contribution we make on a daily basis. That's why, no matter what they may have accomplished in the past, memorable bosses are never too good to roll up their sleeves, get dirty, and do the "grunt" work. No job is ever too menial, no task ever too unskilled or boring. Memorable bosses never feel entitled, which means no one feels entitled to anything but the fruits of their labor.

7. They lead by permission, not authority.

Every boss has a title. That title gives them the right to direct others, to make decisions, to organize and instruct and discipline. Memorable bosses lead because their employees want them to lead. Their employees are motivated and inspired by the person, not the title. Through their words and actions, they cause employees to feel they work with, not for, a boss. Many bosses don't even recognize there's a difference, but memorable bosses do.

8. They embrace a larger purpose.

A good boss works to achieve company goals. A memorable boss also works to achieve company goals--and achieves more than other bosses--but also works to serve a larger purpose: to advance the careers of employees, to rescue struggling employees, to instill a sense of pride and self-worth in others. They aren't just remembered for nuts-and-bolts achievements but for helping others on a personal and individual level. Memorable bosses embrace a larger purpose, because they know business is always personal.

9. They take real, not fake risks.

Many bosses, like many people, try to stand out in some superficial way. Maybe through their clothes, their interests, or a public display of support for a popular initiative. They do stand out, but they stand out for reasons of sizzle, not steak.

Memorable bosses stand out because they are willing to take an unpopular stand, take an unpopular step, accept the discomfort of ignoring the status quo, and risk sailing uncharted waters.

They take real risks not for the sake of risk but for the sake of the reward they believe possible. And by their example they inspire others to take risks to achieve what they believe is possible.

In short, memorable bosses inspire others to achieve their dreams: by words, by actions, and, most important, by example.