



Harry E. Chambers

## Surviving the Micromanager

### How to succeed with a "my way" boss

#### Is a micromanager the boss of you?

Join the crowd.

A recent workplace survey revealed that four out of five people – managers and workers alike – know firsthand the woes of being micromanaged. Micromanagers hurt productivity and morale – and often drive others away. In fact, one out of three people has changed jobs because of a micromanager.

#### The good news?

You are neither hopeless nor helpless.

There is a lot you can do to survive *and* succeed with a "my way" boss. But, first, you have to understand your manager's behavior – and exactly how he/she manages to disrupt people and performance.

#### Defining the Behaviors

Micromanagers get a bad wrap – most often as "control freaks." Yet, to really understand and deal with a "micro" boss, it is

important to know the five specific behaviors that define micromanagers.

#### They exercise raw power.

Micromanagers love to flex their muscles – asserting their power and authority just because they can. While unable to subordinate themselves, they control others with an uncompromising sense of entitlement and self-interest.



#### They dictate time.

Micromanagers like to control and manipulate others' time. They do not trust people to assess their own workload, so they routinely dictate priorities and distort deadlines. And while they guard their own time with an iron fist, they are notorious for inter-

rupting others, misusing and mismanaging meetings, and perpetuating crises.

#### They control how work gets done.

Micromanagers want everything to be done their way. After all, the boss knows best – or so they think. They dismiss others' knowledge, experience and ideas – no matter how good – then hover over them to make sure they are doing things "right."

#### They require undue approvals.

Micromanagers share responsibility, but not authority. As the bottlenecks of the workplace, they allow no one to move forward without their approval – even on routine or time-sensitive matters.

#### They demand frequent and unnecessary reports.

Micromanagers are driven to know what is going on. They monitor others to death – requiring a stream of needless reports that focus on activity over outcomes.

#### Getting Real

Taking personal responsibility is

where the rubber hits the road. If you are really serious about succeeding with a micromanager, it is essential to understand the realities.

## You are not a victim.

Victims have no options. You have got plenty of them. While the most extreme option is to quit, why not try to improve the situation before you pack up and go? Besides, micromanagers are everywhere!

## It is not about fixing them.

You cannot "fix" micromanagers or force them to change on their own. You can, however, find your own influence to defuse their disruptive behaviors.

## Your situation is what it is.

Focusing on what your situation "should" be saps energy and creativity. Instead, deal in the real world by looking at your situation for what it really is.

## You cannot change everything.

Some factors are well beyond your control, so get over them and focus your energy and influence where it will really pay off.

## Defusing the Disruptive Behaviors

There are a variety of strategies for dealing with micromanagers. Again, none of them are about "fixing" them. Instead, they are about working to defuse their disruptive behaviors – starting with some practical, sure-fire tips.

## Find out their agenda.

Everyone has an agenda, especially the micromanagers. Figure out what is *really* important to them, then work with them – not against them.

## Take the information initiative.

Micromanagers are driven to know what is going on. Do not wait to be asked for information. Find out what they need to feel confident and comfortable, then get it to them – *ahead of time*.

## Practice the "art" of communication.

No one fears inertia more than the micromanager. Show that you are in motion on priority projects by communicating in three specific terms – Awareness, Reassurance, and Timelines.

## Stay clear on expectations.

Confusion runs high with the micromanager – turning expectations into a fast-moving target. Clarify your conversations and agreements in a trail of memos and e-mails.

## Renegotiate priorities.

The micromanager is notorious for piling it on. Come up with a simple, straightforward method – such as a numerical or color-coded system – for renegotiating the ever-shifting priorities.

## Be preemptive on deadlines.

The micromanager loves to impose and even distort deadlines. Be the first to talk –

offering a timeline for when *you* can do a task (not when you cannot).

## Play by the rules.

The micromanager enjoys catching people in the act. Avoid being an easy target and play by the rules – particularly on policies regarding time and technology.

## Learn from the "best practices" of others.

The micromanager backs off with some more than others. Watch them closely to learn the secrets of their success.

## Pick your battles.

Micromanagers will go to war on every issue. Do not try to match them. Instead, pick the battles that are most important to you.

## Taking the "I" out of micromanager

And what if *you* are a micromanager? You can overcome your own "micro" tendencies if you are willing to confront and change them – *before* they compromise your career. Figure out what you are afraid of. Seek 360° feedback, and get a coach to develop some new "replacement" behaviors.

*Harry E. Chambers is a workplace expert specializing in management and career development and the author of My Way or the Highway: The Micromanagement Survival Guide. (www.harrychambers.com)*

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