

# How to draw the line between boss and friend

When you manage a staff, it's only natural to want them to like you. But at the same time, it's a mistake to get so chummy with employees that you lose your ability to lead them effectively.

The best managers walk a fine line by earning the respect of their team without going overboard and befriending everyone. Here's how you can strike the proper balance:

## **Listen and learn**

Many managers hate to hear all the problems their employees bring to them on a daily basis. But whether your workers raise personal or professional matters with you, reserve time for these discussions. Practice active listening.

## **Follow up**

Here's a simple way to show more kindness while still maintaining your professional distance: Ask followup questions about employees' personal lives away from work.

If a subordinate tells you he intends to volunteer at a local hospital this weekend, ask how it went when you greet him next Monday. If an administrative assistant mentions that she's taking a big exam in her night class tomorrow, remember to ask her about it later in the week.

## **Reject petty office gripes**

Never allow employees to rattle off problems without proposing solutions. Otherwise, you may find yourself buried under the weight of all their crises.

If a worker starts complaining, interrupt and say, "I understand what's bothering you. What steps are you taking to fix it?"