

# Where's the boss? 6 signs you're under-managing your employees

No leader wants to earn the dreaded title of micromanager, but offering too little management support (otherwise known as “under-managing”) can be just as detrimental and unappealing for employees.

While there's a fine line between empowering your employees to own their work and be accountable, and under-managing to the point that your team doesn't perceive you as engaged, accessible or even aware of what they do, recognizing the difference is the first step to making sure you're not so “hands-off” that you're not managing anything, or anyone.

Here are six signs that you may be under-managing.

**1. You rarely deal with conflict.** Conflict is a natural side-effect of teamwork and collaborative environments, and it isn't always hostile or negative. The employees you manage don't need you to resolve every problem on their behalf, but a supportive and proactive manager must have the willingness to “go to bat” for employees when necessary and appropriate.

Inevitably, there will be times when other departments in your company want to lean on your staff to handle work that's outside of their scope, impose deadlines that aren't realistic or ask your team members for support when they don't have the bandwidth.

If you're not aware of these issues and/or involving yourself in them so your employees don't always have to fend for themselves, you may be undermanaging.

**2. Your employees don't know which projects are a priority.** Your job as a leader is to help your employees do their best possible work, but without priority, they can't put 100% effort into any project. On your weekly one-one-ones, ask employees the status of the various projects on their list, which are top priority and why.

If you find that they don't know, do some digging and help them figure it out.

**3. Your employees don't have goals or know where they stand in achieving them.** Whether your company conducts annual, semi-annual, quarterly or monthly performance reviews, all of your employees should have a running, current list of goals—and know where they stand when it comes to achieving them.

This requires that you actively know what they're doing, how it relates to the goals they're working to achieve and how well they're tracking to meet those goals.

Those who are falling short of their goals need your coaching to get back on track; those who are meeting or exceeding the goals you've set need you to elevate the challenge.

**4. You don't know whether your employees are satisfied.** You can never be 100% certain that your employee isn't on the job hunt, but an engaged manager should never be surprised when an employee resigns.

If you can't honestly assess how likely it is that an employee would look for other opportunities based on their performance, development opportunities, attitude, compensation and engagement at any given time, or you lack an action plan for those employees you feel are likely to leave, you may be undermanaging.

**5. You don't know when to offer praise.** Did your employee just complete a major project? Did it elevate the customer experience or deliver significant results for the sales team, the company at large or another stakeholder? Did you have to hear this information from a second or third source before you knew your employee deserved praise or credit for the accomplishment?

If you don't know enough about what your employees do to be the first to congratulate them on a job well-done, you're undermanaging.

**6. Do you know where your employee aspires to be in the next year?** Lack of professional growth options cause good employees to leave jobs, and typically, top performers will be the first to leave when they perceive they're in a dead-end role.

If you don't know what types of work your employee wants to be doing one year from now, and/or you have no action plan to help them develop the skills that will make that vision a reality, you're undermanaging.