

## Can a boss be “too nice”?

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Joe Bloggs didn't like confronting people or making decisions that favoured one employee over another. He wouldn't address absenteeism or poor performance because he wanted to give everyone a chance. He was happy to let staff take time off without recording their leave or even applying for it. Joe felt it was better to be the “father figure” than actually deal with issues professionally in his business. What harm could there be in this way of management?

This approach may have worked until one day Joe decided he should talk to the poor performer about his absenteeism. The employee left in a huff and never returned. Two months later Joe received a letter from a lawyer saying the employee had been constructively dismissed. To cut a long story short, many letters were sent between the parties' representatives, mediation took place and sadly for Joe, money exchanged hands because he hadn't managed the poor performer's behaviours properly when he worked for Joe.

So what happens when a boss is too benevolent?

- Ideas get overshadowed by others in the business who are more assertive about making their cases.
- Workplace problems fester when postponement occurs.
- Mediocrity flourishes as underperformers become the norm.
- Needed change is delayed as bosses hesitate to nudge people out of their comfort zones.
- Typically the boss starts to rescue others workloads when complaints trickle in or timeframes are not met.
- Bullies and big-mouths win.
- Lastly, the boss loses respect.

### **The Do's and Don'ts of being a better boss**

The key is to learn to be professionally friendly. It's hard to define what kind of behaviour and attitude a “friendly boss” has that a buddy-boss lacks. Some experts suggest that it boils down to learning how to acknowledge employee's contributions and helping them achieve their career goals without become overly kind. When underperforming employees are not held accountable for poor performance – especially if other employees have seen the boss being sociable with that person – it can lead to accusations of favouritism. One of the most difficult situations in which bosses must draw the line between friend and manager is when they are promoted over their former peers. Understandably, the pressure to be well liked is strong, but it makes it difficult to hold employees responsible for their mistakes. You can be sympathetic to your troubled employee's problems, but you shouldn't let that get in the way of business.