

Excerpt from “Why are you still a slave by Peter Johnson

You’re the boss, but who tells you when you messed up?

If you are a staff member and you do something wrong, you will probably have at least two or three systems that alert a boss to come and kick you for messing it up again. Who tells the boss when he is getting it wrong? Sure, if it’s obvious what you have done is wrong, then even if they don’t tell you, you know that they know and you might try to fix it but what if it is not obvious? The boss needs systems that tell him when he is getting it wrong because nobody is going to give the boss the sack! The hard part is that you will not intentionally do something wrong, so how do you organise a system to stop you doing things wrong that you do not know about yet? It is a very difficult question and one that many people in business never quite get, but in order to succeed long-term, you will need processes that stop you from messing up the company or your life.

I have always sought the advice of business mentors at the first hint of something going wrong. Remember that a mentor’s advice is only as useful as the portions of it that you follow (the same as this book). I also have systems that require me to continually develop myself and seek out more education about the industry I am in. I hire antagonists that have the strength to rein me in when I get out of control in areas that I know I need help with. I look at the numbers and look for any “odd” things, even if they have already been checked. I listen to what I am saying and how I am presenting myself in the same way as I would any staff member. These are some of the things I do but the point is that you need to start looking at things you are doing wrong as the boss. One way to do this is to listen carefully to new staff because before you teach them to do it the difficult way they will often have a new perspective that can improve your company.

Just because your staff did not see you do it does not mean that you should hurt your business when they are not looking. The fish stinks from the head down and so often bosses teach bad habits to their staff and expect them to behave differently, which, of course, they don’t. Know yourself, identify your weaknesses, and design systems that compensate for those things while exploiting your strengths.

When you are doing well, reward yourself. When things are not so good, don’t. Just because you have the money now to buy a new car, don’t. Not until you have had a good week. Because if you get into a habit of rewarding yourself no matter what your performance is, then why does it matter how hard you work or how well the company is doing?

These are just a few things that come to mind and work for me but, as you’re the boss, you will need to come up with your own list of sticks and carrots. One thing is for sure, though. If you don’t have a system that keeps you on track then you won’t be. You’re the boss and you need to kick yourself if you do a bad job and reward yourself when you do well.

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