It's Okay To Be The Boss

Video Training User's Guide

WHAT IS THIS PROGRAM?

Welcome to *It's Okay to Be the Boss,* the video course that teaches the fundamentals of highly-engaged management.

Most managers are hands-off and practice what we call "undermanagement," which leads to all kinds of headaches with employee performance and accountability – unnecessary problems, wasted resources, rework, low performers who hide out collecting a paycheck and high performers who get frustrated and think about leaving …. Any of this sound familiar?
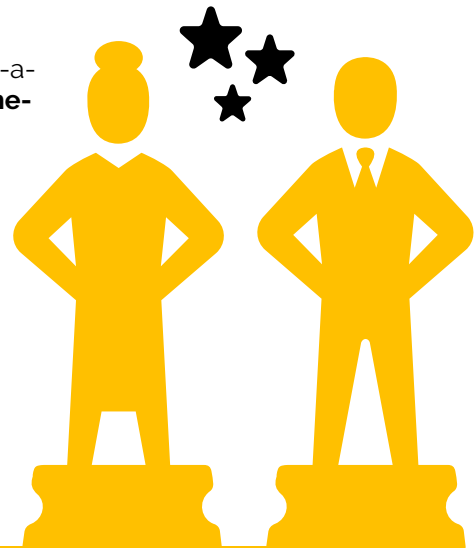
Good news: there are eight steps anyone can follow to become a better, more effective manager and turn these problems around.

With this program you will learn the powerful techniques of **high-substance, high-structure communication** that will change the way you lead people and produce real results.

You'll learn these techniques through **60 short videos** (one-and-a-half to five minutes long), each of which is accompanied by a **one-page writeup of key takeaways.**

HOW TO USE THIS PROGRAM

- **WATCH** the videos

- **REVIEW** the key takeaways

- **DISCUSS** the material with other users on the site or with other members of your group if you are learning as part of a team

- **APPLY** the lessons in your workplace

- **RE-WATCH** videos as needed

GOALS & OBJECTIVES UPON COMPLETION

- Understand what strong, highly-engaged leadership looks like and why it is more effective than hands-off leadership

- Recognize common obstacles to being an engaged manager and learn to overcome them or work around them

- Learn the eight back-to-basics techniques for being the leader your employees need

- Develop an action plan for applying the eight techniques to improve your ability to be a great manager or supervisor

- Put the techniques into practice to change the management culture in your team or organization and help improve your business outcomes

GETTING THE MOST FROM THE COURSE

FINISH THE WHOLE COURSE BEFORE CHANGING YOUR MANAGEMENT STYLE
For the techniques in the course to work best you'll need to understand all eight steps of highly-engaged management, which means completing the whole course. If you start using the techniques before you are done you will be missing part of the picture.

But that doesn't mean that you have to wait until you are finished to start planning. Depending on how you managed before, these techniques are likely to represent a whole new approach to leading people, so it's worth it spending time as you learn in order to think about how this will fit into your specific situation.

For best results you need to do mental and logistical groundwork, so while you may be excited, don't rush to apply these techniques before finishing the course. **Plan and prepare as you go through the course; put it all into practice when you are done.**

That said, the course is self-paced and you can work through it on whatever timetable is convenient for you. Since each video is only a few minutes long, it should be feasible to finish the course in just a few weeks even if you have a busy schedule.

The course is designed in sequence so at least the first time through it's best to watch all the videos in order rather than skipping around. After that you can go back to any lesson you want to review. Re-watching the videos is a great way to reinforce the lessons and check to make sure you are on track once you start practicing the techniques. Changing your management style is not one-and-done, it's an ongoing process, so it helps to review on a regular basis.

DISCUSSIONS HELP MAKE IT REAL

The best way to reinforce the material in the videos and apply it to your own situation is to discuss it. Each lesson page has a comment section where you can discuss with other users and share ideas. Users also often take this course in groups with other managers in their organization or their network, meeting on a regular basis like a book club.

Both within this guide and on the website are conversation starters for each lesson. These prompts will help you relate personally to the ideas and techniques presented. Even if you don't have a group to learn with or don't want to use the comments section on the lesson page, you can use the conversation starters as a prompt to think through or write out your responses to the lessons.

USE THE WORKSHEETS

There are several worksheets in the resources section of the online course. These will help with practicing some of the key techniques of highly-engaged management.

FURTHER READING

You can go even deeper with the book the course is based on, ***It's Okay to be the Boss,*** and the follow-up, ***The 27 Challenges Managers Face***.

***Both books sold separately. Available on Amazon; for large orders contact **mail@rainmakerthinking.com**

LEADING OTHERS THROUGH THE COURSE

YOUR ROLE AS LEADER
If you are leading a learning group through the course, it's your responsibility to explain to your group how to access the program, to set the schedule for working through the material, and to lead any discussions.

REGULAR DISCUSSIONS PROVIDE STRUCTURE

As noted above, the best way to reinforce the material in the videos and relate it to your group's situation is to have them discuss it. We recommend gathering your learning group together for discussion and review on a regular basis. Whether you meet daily to discuss one or two videos, or meet weekly to discuss five or six videos, it's a good idea to establish a rhythm to work your way through the material.

Use the conversation starters provided in this guide and online for each lesson to get the ball rolling on discussion. These discussions are also a good setting to apply the lessons to your specific organization.

BECOME THE EXPERT

It helps if you as group leader are familiar with the material. Plan to watch all of the videos before beginning work with your group so you understand the whole course and can lead the discussions with confidence. Reading the books referenced in the "Further Reading" section above will also help you deepen your expertise.

WHAT ELSE IS IN THIS GUIDE

- The Manager's Checklist, a preview of the eight fundamental steps you'll learn and put into practice

- A list of all lessons

- Conversation starters for each lesson

MANAGER'S CHECKLIST

A preview of the eight fundamental steps you'll learn and practice to become a strong, hands-on manager.

☐ Set aside one hour a day to manage your employees. At first, use that time to prepare for the one-on-one conversations you will soon be having.

☐ As you talk with employees about the work, practice talking like a performance coach.

☐ Create your manager's landscape. Lay out the six questions at the top of a piece of paper (or use the worksheet in this course) and answer each question about each employee: Who, Why, What, How, Where, and When.

☐ Make a preliminary schedule for coaching.

☐ Create your own system for tracking performance.

☐ Reach out to people (such as your own boss or others who manage a particular employee) and discuss your coaching plans

☐ Start a regular schedule of ongoing one-on-one coaching conversations.

☐ Stay flexible. Revise and adjust every step of the way.

LESSON DESCRIPTIONS

CONVERSATION STARTERS

1 **The Undermanagement Epidemic**
Introduces **"undermanagement"** and explains the eight costs of undermanagement.

Do you sometimes provide too little guidance, direction and support to your employees in the workplace? What are some reasons this is happening?

2 **The Top Seven Management Myths**
Outlines the common myths that prevent managers from being strong.

In your own experience, which of the seven myths is hardest to resist?

3 **The Myth of Empowerment**
The difference between false empowerment and real empowerment.

How would you describe the ways you've empowered your employees in the past? How often have you fallen for "false empowerment" thinking – often, sometimes, or never? Explain.

4 **The Myth of Fairness**
Debunks the myth that the way to treat people fairly is to treat them all the same.

In an effort to treat everyone fairly, some managers end up treating nobody fairly. What consequences of "false fairness" do you see in your organization?

5 **The Myth of the Jerk Boss**
The five common patterns that bosses commonly fall into.

Think about the five common jerk boss scenarios... could any of those be used to describe your behavior recently? If so, describe the situation.

6 **The Myth of the Difficult Confrontation**
The importance of regular one-on-one meetings.

When was the last time you had a difficult confrontation with one of your direct reports? Share what you were thinking immediately after the confrontation.

7 **The Myth of Red Tape**
Debunks the myth that rules prevent managers from being strong and highly-engaged.

When was the last time you tried to ask HR for help either rewarding or punishing an employee based on their performance? How did that process go? What could you do differently in the future to make that process easier for everyone?

8 **The Myth of the Natural Leader**
Debunks the myth that people cannot learn leadership skills and need to be naturally good at leadership.

Whether or not you consider yourself a real "natural leader," what natural traits and characteristics do you have that might make it **harder** for you to be a more effective leader?

LESSON DESCRIPTIONS

CONVERSATION STARTERS

9

The Myth of Time
How making some extra time to manage saves time in the long run.

If you're going to commit to spending more time managing people, you'll need to find that time in your schedule. What are three things you can do to ensure you make time for managing people?

10

Eight Steps Back to the Fundamentals of Management
The eight steps back to the fundamentals of highly-engaged management.

What do you think of the eight steps? How would you modify any of the eight steps to better fit your organization?

11

Get in the Habit of Managing People Every Day
The importance of getting into daily management practice.

Be honest with yourself: Right now, do you tend to err on the side of "management by special occasion?" Or would you say you are in the habit of managing people up-front one-on-one every single day? Give some examples.

12

The Four Good Reasons for a Team Meeting
Why team meetings are no substitute for on-on-one meetings, and what team meetings are good for.

What are the worst things about the team meetings that you attend and/or run? What can you do to improve?

13

What Is High-Structure and High-Substance
A good way to build real rapport and maintain credibility.

What could you do to start conversations with direct reports about the work they are doing in a way that feels genuine?

14

If You Have Too Many Employees to Manage
Ideas for how to be an effective manager for a large number of direct reports.

How many people do you manage directly? If you think it is too many people, what steps outlined in the lesson might you be able to take within your organization to help improve the situation?

15

Managing Is Like Staying in Shape
Practicing the basics of management every day is the key to long-term, lasting results.

What actions can you improve on or start taking that will help make your management time simpler and more routine?

LESSON DESCRIPTIONS

CONVERSATION STARTERS

16

Six Good Questions to Help Customize Your Management Approach
Asking these questions will clarify how you need to manage each employee.

Are you worried that if you treat people differently some will complain that it's unfair? What kinds of differential treatment do you think would be unfair? What kind of differential treatment would be fair?

17

Who Is This Person?
Ways to characterize who your direct reports are at work so that you know what kind of support they need.

Think about your direct reports as individuals. What are the characteristics you'll use to describe who your direct reports are?

18

Why?
Ways to think about what you need from this employee and what they need from you.

What are some of the goals you'll use to articulate why you need to manage each person? Be specific to your situation.

19

What?
Ways to think about specifically what to talk about with your employees.

What are some of the things you'll need to talk with your direct reports about?

20

How?
Ways to think about how you will talk to each employee.

What are some of the methods you'll use to describe how you'll talk to each of your direct reports?

21

Where?
Ways to think about where you should talk to each employee.

Where do you normally hold your one-on-one meetings with your direct reports? Do you have any cases where it might be beneficial to have meetings in a different location? Why?

22

When?
Ways to think about how often to have meetings with employees.

On average, across all of your direct reports, how often are you holding your one-on-one meetings? Do you see cases where it might need to be more frequent? For what reasons?

23

The Manager's Landscape
How the six customizing questions can be used as a tracking tool.

How would making a Manager's Landscape help you keep better track of employee performance over time and adjust your management style along the way?

LESSON DESCRIPTIONS

CONVERSATION STARTERS

24 **Learn to Talk Like a Performance Coach**
The two key elements of effective coaching.

Would you say you have a management style? Describe your management style in as much detail as you can. And then ask yourself - are you describing a style that you chose or just habits that you fell into?

25 **Start Asking the Right Questions**
The difference between effective and ineffective questions.

Think about the last time you asked one of your direct reports something similar to "How's everything going?" What kind of response did you get? What could you have asked to get a better response?

26 **Master the Technique of "Describing Language"**
Describing language is more effective than naming language in your ongoing management coaching.

Can you think of an example in your own experience when you had a great teacher or coach? What kinds of describing language did they use? Make a list of key words and sentences.

27 **Make Accountability a Process, Not a Slogan**
Accountability works when people know, in advance, that they will be required to give an account of their own performance.

What are the most common obstacles that make it hard for you to hold your direct reports accountable in your workplace? What can you do to overcome these obstacles?

28 **Holding People Accountable Through Interdependence**
How to hold people accountable, even when their performance relies on someone else's.

Think about someone on your team who relies on another person in order to get their work done. What steps could that person take to get what they need on time?

29 **Holding People Accountable Who Answer to Multiple Bosses**
Approaches to improve accountability and productivity in these situations.

Whenever you give an assignment, what questions can you ask or what other actions can you take to avoid employee confusion over priorities?

30 **Holding People Accountable by Using Influence**
Getting results when you don't have authority.

Are you currently responsible for work from people over whom you have limited or no real authority? If so, which of the four types of influence (interpersonal influence, persuasion, transactional influence, deputizing yourself) are you most likely to use, and why?

LEARNING

LESSON DESCRIPTIONS

CONVERSATION STARTERS

31
Be Honest, You're Requiring More of People
You may face some resistance when introducing hands-on management methods. How to respond to it.

When your direct reports push back in conversations about the work, what kinds of things do they say? How could you be more honest and transparent in your responses?

32
When You, the Manager, are New to the Team
How practicing hands-on management will establish credibility with your new team.

When you started practicing highly-engaged management with your team, how long had you been managing the team? Discuss some of the things that you mentioned to your team that were effective when introducing this management style.

33
Creating Accountability When Managing Peers and Friends
The importance of highly-engaged management for clear roles and boundaries.

Have there been any special challenges you've faced when trying to manage employees who are friends or peers? What were the challenges? How have you dealt with those challenges?

34
Holding Employees Accountable When They Have Greater Expertise Than You Do
How hands-on management will help in this situation.

Do you currently have any direct reports who have greater expertise on the subject matter they are working on than you do? What challenges does this present to you as a manager?

35
Make Expectations Clear Every Step of the Way
The importance of clear expectations and some questions that can help.

What sort of questions work best for you when it comes to clarifying expectations?

36
The Difference Between Broad Performance Standards and Expectations
Why most managers fail to provide concrete expectations and instead rely on broad performance standards in their coaching.

Are you comfortable telling people what to do, but not the concrete steps of how to do it? If so, why is that? What would improve if you started spelling out expectations in clearer terms?

37
Checklists Are Tools of Clarity
The value of checklists and how to develop them.

Do you currently keep checklists, documenting exactly what you are doing as you are doing it, for your own work? What could make your use of checklists more valuable?

LESSON DESCRIPTIONS

CONVERSATION STARTERS

38

Real Micromanagement
What micromanagement actually is and how to avoid it.

Describe a situation where you thought you were being micromanaged. Knowing what you know now, do you still think it was micromanagement? Explain your reasoning.

39

Delegation Is the True Art of Empowerment
The importance of being specific about tasks and goals when delegating.

Do you feel comfortable delegating work to employees? Why or why not? Consider the people with whom you are not as comfortable delegating work. What would make you more comfortable delegating work to those people?

40

Even Creative Assignments Have Parameters
The concrete measures that can apply to any type of work.

Do you have any direct reports whose work could benefit from having clear parameters set? Explain how you can approach setting parameters.

41

Keep Track of Your Employees Every Step of the Way
The importance of being all over the details.

In your current position, when you learn about an employee's performance (good, bad, or average) how does this information usually come to your attention? What is your most common source of information about your employees' performance? What else could you do to get additional feedback about an employee?

42

The Five Ways to Monitor Employees
Explanation of the five methods.

Of the five ways to monitor employee performance, which way do you use most often? Least often? Which are new to you that you are interested in trying, and why?

43

What Gets Measured and What Should Get Measured?
The shortcomings of only measuring bottom-line numbers and how to avoid these.

Have you ever found the employee review process to be inadequate, incomplete, or unfair? Why? What happened? What went wrong?

44

Coaching on Tangible or Intangible Problems
How describing language helps with coaching.

Can you think of any employees you've managed in the past or present who displayed either an intangible or tangible performance problem? Describe in detail the person's behavior without using "naming" words.

LESSON DESCRIPTIONS	CONVERSATION STARTERS
45 **Keep Track in Writing** Don't wait until people are failing to start tracking performance.	Do you currently keep track of employee performance in writing? What is your method? What are you keeping track of? Are you keeping track of any factors that might not actually be in the employee's direct control?
46 **Four Reasons to Keep Track in Writing Every Step of the Way** Four benefits of keeping track in writing.	Which of the four benefits of keeping track in writing would improve your management the most?
47 **How to Track Performance in Writing** Different methods for tracking performance in concrete terms.	Are there existing checklists and SOPs in your organization, or tools for creating them? If not, what can you do to create these for your own use?
48 **Solve Small Problems Before They Turn into Big Problems** How regular dialogue prevents major problems down the line.	When it comes to managing your direct reports, what are some of the small problems that you tend to let slide? Can you think of the last time one of these grew into a bigger problem? Share your experience.
49 **Focus on the Behavior You Want People to Start Doing** How to help employees modify problematic behavior.	Do you currently manage any direct reports whose behavior at work you would like to change? Share a specific example.
50 **Ongoing Performance Problems - Is It Me, or Is It You?** The three broad categories of employee problems and the importance of identifying if it's actually a management problem.	Consider the employee performance problems that you encounter consistently as a manager, the ones that really drive you nuts. Now ask yourself, "Is it my direct reports or is it me? Can I do a better job of coaching employees on how to work faster, how to work better, or how to behave in a way that is appropriate?" What did you come up with?
51 **Are Ongoing Performance Problems a Matter of Ability, Skill, or Will?** The three areas of employee problems and how to address them.	Consider the employee performance problems that you still encounter consistently as a manager, despite the fact you've been providing thorough guidance, direction, support, and coaching. Which of these three categories do the majority of those problems fall into: ability, skill, or will? How can you address it?

LESSON DESCRIPTIONS

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52

Four Reasons You Must Fire Low Performers
Considerations for when you have to fire an employee.

Have you ever fired an employee? What happened? What did you do to work with the employee first to try to help them correct their performance? What process did you go through with HR in advance of firing the person?

53

Do More for Some People and Less for Others, Based on Performance
The value of giving extra rewards for great performance.

What's your opinion of the statement that the way to be fair to employees is to treat everybody the same?

54

Be Flexible and Generous with Your Employees
The benefit of doing more for your employees.

How much of your day-to-day mindset involves thinking about doing more for your direct reports who work harder, faster, and better? What can you do to make that a part of your routine for people who are doing the most in terms of what you are asking of them?

55

Three Principles of Rewarding Employees - Control, Timing, and Customization
The value of giving the power to employees when it comes to differential, performance-based rewards.

Have you ever been able to work out a custom deal or special reward ("needle in a haystack") with an employee? What was the deal? How did it work?

56

Five Non-Financial Rewards That People Want
Ways you can reward employees besides money.

What steps would you have to follow in order to use any of the five non-financial rewards as bargaining chips with your direct reports?

57

Prepare Yourself to Be a Better Manager
A review of the seven myths that prevent managers from being strong that you should avoid.

Let's revisit the seven myths that prevent managers from being strong – What do you think of these myths? Would you modify any of the myths to better fit your situation?

58

Prepare Logistically to Be a Better Manager
Logistics you need to consider as you prepare to change your management style.

What are the biggest logistical concerns you need to consider before changing your management style? What might need to change about the way you work with your own boss?

RAINMAKERLEARNING

LESSON DESCRIPTIONS

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59

Management Change Has to Be Good News
The importance of letting your employees know about your new method and that it is designed to help them.

What are all the ways in which it is really good news that you are going be a better manager? How did you share this with your employees?

60

Stay Flexible - Revise and Adjust Every Step of the Way
The importance of continuing to practice your new method and adjusting as appropriate.

Have you committed to being a strong, hands-on manager? Have you been having one-on-one meetings with your direct reports? How are the meetings going?