

Media Article



Vocational Guidance Services

Your Boss: Drill Sergeant or Leader?

Does your boss make you feel like a cadet in the armed forces, constantly yelling orders, or is your boss a true leader who you would willingly follow into battle?

We could clearly define the two types of manager: one is the Drill Sergeant and the other one is the leader. Drill Sergeant believes in keeping you in line, punishing you if you step over the line, whilst the leader believes in rewarding you for initiative, and motivates you to try harder.

The Drill Sergeant expects total respect and you dare not question their knowledge or authority, whilst the leader encourages you to express new ideas and believes they have much to learn, including from you. Drill Sergeant will give you clearly defined roles and limits to responsibilities, whilst the leader will develop teamwork, creativity and a shared vision. The old army commander believes in good old discipline and focuses on the 'bottom line'. For him, control is everything whilst the true leader accepts that change is inevitable and that to try to control everything is to hamper organizational growth.

Drill Sergeants whole life is defined by rank and hierarchy, whilst the leader embraces building networks and 'win/win' relationships. The army type boss is rigid; the leader flexible. Whilst Drill Sergeant thinks the only way to get his staff to work is by using the 'big stick' approach, the leader believes in carrots, and pays for performance. The Sergeant uses the dreaded annual performance appraisal to deliver his standard 'you can do better' lecture, whilst the leader looks at it as a rolling process of maintaining a mutual contract for company and personal growth.

The Sergeant will recruit purely on the basis of 'what can you do for me?', and it will never cross his mind that you might be looking for a company which allows you to grow, too. Unfortunately, Sergeant thinks only in a step-by-step ('left/right/left/right') kind of way, whilst the true leader thinks holistically.

The two types of boss also differ when it comes to teaching. The Sergeant gives orders which are to be followed, not questioned, whilst the leader makes a great facilitator for learning. Sergeant demands unquestioning obedience whilst the leader knows you learn best through coaching and mentoring, and makes a good role model.

Sergeant rules through fear and enjoys 'keeping people on their toes' whilst the leader is more paternalistic, providing a rich environment for growth. Sergeant feels strongly that information is power and should be controlled, whilst the leader is confident enough to share knowledge.

Sergeant is convinced he knows all the answers, that you should do as he says, not as he does. True leaders do not believe anyone can have all the answers, but they know how to ask the right questions.

So whilst one type of boss is dictatorial and authoritarian, the other is empowering and inspiring. Who would you rather follow into battle?

Madeleine Dunford
Managing Director
Career Connections

