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## Executive Book Summaries®

# Be the Boss Everyone Wants to Work For

## A Guide for New Leaders

### THE SUMMARY IN BRIEF

You've been promoted to leadership — congratulations! But it's nothing like your old job, is it? William Gentry says it's time to flip your script.

We all have mental scripts that tell us how the world works. Your old script was all about “me”: standing out as an individual. But as a new leader, you need to flip your script from “me” to “we” and help the group you lead succeed.

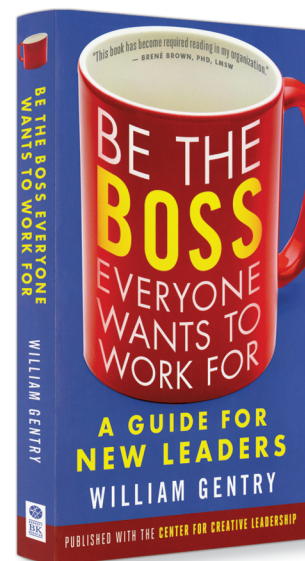
In *Be the Boss Everyone Wants to Work For*, Gentry supports and coaches you to flip your script in six key areas. He offers actionable, practical, evidence-based advice and examples drawn from his research, his work with leaders, and his own failures and triumphs of becoming a new leader.

But this book is more than a series of best practices — it's your guide to internalizing a leader's perspective. Gentry helps you flip your script so you'll know what to do to help yourself and the team you lead succeed. That's the kind of boss everyone wants to work for — and the kind of boss who accomplishes the most.

Get started flipping your script, and become the kind of boss everyone wants to work for.

### IN THIS SUMMARY, YOU WILL LEARN:

- Why becoming a new leader brings a sea change in roles and expectations.
- The six ways you can “flip your script” to become a boss everyone wants to work for.
- The importance of non-verbal communication among leaders.
- How to adjust to new relationships with subordinates and teams.
- How to gain a leader's perspective and develop and focus on others.



by William Gentry

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# THE COMPLETE SUMMARY: BE THE BOSS EVERYONE WANTS TO WORK FOR

by William Gentry

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## Introduction

Exceeding expectations and having a very special set of technical skills helps a person stand out from others and makes a high-performing employee and possibly a kick-ass movie hero. It does not necessarily make a boss everyone wants to work for.

New leaders must do something much more substantial and, frankly, much more different from anything they've ever done before in their professional careers. It's probably why so many are struggling, even failing, in their new gigs as bosses.

Consider the following findings over the past decade: 82 percent of frontline leaders (where many new leaders are in organizations) are not rated as "excellent" in skills and capabilities as leaders; 80 percent of frontline leaders are dissatisfied with the job they are doing as leaders, and 70 percent of their senior managers agree; 40 percent of newly promoted leaders fail within the first 18 months; 50 percent of managers are labeled as incompetent, a disappointment, a wrong hire or a complete failure by their co-workers.

New leaders get a raw deal. Actually, many of them get no deal at all. Almost 60 percent of new leaders receive nothing in formal training or development when they become a boss for the first time. Nothing. Just a "We can make this official on Monday" congratulations and an expectation that as soon as HR approves the promotion, they will lead others just as effectively, if not better, than middle-to-senior-level executives who have had years of leadership experience.

Becoming a leader for the first time in your life is no doubt one of the biggest psychological and emotional

shifts you will ever experience in your career. It's totally different from what you do in your normal, everyday work as an individual contributor.

If you want to be more than that title on your business card and you want to step up your game, there's hope. This is your fresh start. You can be a new leader and the boss everyone wants to work for. ●

## Flip Your Script So You Won't Flop as a Boss

There is one overarching theme for new leaders to be the boss everyone wants to work for: Flip your script.

First, let's be clear on what a script is. Think about a play, musical, movie or television show you've watched. It was scripted. It used written text to guide the performance.

But scripts aren't just for jocks, nerds, villains, heroes and heroines on stage and screen. We all have scripts in our lives. In your own life, you write your own script and live your life based on what your script says about the various roles you have: parent, child, partner, spouse, sibling, community activist. Your script helps you understand who you are and how to live. It's what is expected of you.

When you write your own script, you provide details about how you are supposed to think; what you are supposed to do; how you should act, feel, relate with others; how you should view the world; and how you should view yourself. Scripts help us understand our roles and our purpose.

The script for individual contributors is all about "me" and "my" own abilities, achievements, technical expertise



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and personal desire to get ahead. That's not necessarily a bad thing; having ambition and seeking personal excellence are worthy traits. It's perfectly normal for us to be motivated to succeed and do well in life.

But to be a successful leader, to transition from a technical expert to a leader of people, you must be willing to shed the "individual contributor" role that got you the promotion to leadership in the first place and stop shining the spotlight on "me, myself and I."

Flip from a "me mentality" to putting attention on "we" and "us." That old script — that relentless determination to complete work, reliance on technical savvy, being a subject matter expert, that focus on "me," to get rewards, recognition and impress others — is nowhere in the script of a new leader who wants to be the boss everyone wants to work for.

Realize that the biggest driver of any new leader's success is not about "me" anymore. Make others — your staff, your team, the people you lead and serve — successful and help them fulfill their potential. Flip from being the center of attention to shining the spotlight on others.

### Six Ways to Flip Your Script

Flipping your script is a huge idea, a big deal. It goes against every normal and natural instinct you may have. It's so different from everything that has made you successful up to this point in your career. But leading others is so different from anything you've ever done before. Here are six parts of the script you must flip in order to be the boss everyone wants to work for.

- Flip your mindset.
- Flip your skill set.
- Flip your relationships.
- Flip your do-it-all attitude.
- Flip your perspective.
- Flip your focus.
- Stick with your flipped script. ●

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## Flip Your Mindset

Research on new leaders suggests that you flip your script by flipping your mindset.

According to Carol Dweck, author of *Mindset*, there are two predominant mindsets. Some people have a *fixed mindset* (what some academics call entity theorists). They think what gets them ahead in life are their innate abilities, intelligence, talents and hard work. They must

constantly prove themselves to others. They want to look smart. They are motivated by extrinsic motives (external rewards, approval from others, wanting to look good in front of others or wanting to prove they are better than others). They also have a fear of failure because failure says something negative about their abilities.

Others have a *growth mindset* (what some academics call incremental theorists). They think their abilities can be developed through learning, training and persistence. They believe they can improve from their own failures. They want to learn because it's fun, engaging, intrinsically pleasing and challenging. This attitude resembles a flipped script.

The research of Dweck and others clearly demonstrates the positive effects of a growth mindset in parenting, school and relationships. And regardless of leadership experience, their research provides evidence that leaders with a growth mindset, a flipped script, are much better off than leaders with a fixed mindset.

In one study, Peter Heslin, Don Vandewalle and Gary Latham focused only on managers with a fixed mindset. They purposefully split fixed-mindset managers into two groups, each taking a 90-minute workshop. The formats of the workshops were nearly identical, with one critical difference:

- One group's 90-minute workshop emphasized the fact that people have multiple abilities, and in some areas they are strong, whereas in other areas, they are weak.
- The other group's 90-minute workshop focused specifically on adopting a growth mindset through "self-persuasion." In that workshop, managers tried to talk themselves into adopting a growth mindset — in other words, flipping their mindset.

So what happened? The fixed-mindset managers who attended the "self-persuasion" training were more willing to provide coaching and had higher quantity and quality of performance-improvement suggestions. These changes were not seen in the fixed-mindset managers who attended the other workshop.

If you think you have a fixed mindset, the research offers you hope. If given the proper time, energy and support you can flip your mindset.

### What You Can Do to Flip Your Mindset

The one big thing you can do to flip your script by flipping your mindset? It's your "mindchatter": talk to yourself differently. Mindchatter is that inner dialogue we have providing us opinions and evaluations on how well (or not so well) we are at doing things. It's the

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play-by-play commentary. It's the positive, optimistic and validating chatter we hear when we do something right. It's also the critical, harsh, crippling, destructive chatter we hear when we aren't at our best and are struggling.

We all face doubt and uncertainty. We all have times when the voices in our head say something like, "I've never been a boss before. Can I do it?" Or, "I've never failed at anything. What happens if I fail at this?" Or worse, "I'm not good at this. I'll never be able to flip my script."

When things start to go sideways, we tend to start focusing more on ourselves, our own talents and keeping our egos in check. When you hear these sorts of lines in your head, recognize it's not the mindset of the boss everyone wants to work for. Shut it up. And flip it. Mind-chatter matters.

As a new leader, make sure your mindchatter is constructive. Be perceptive, motivational, realistic and positive. Listen to the right mindchatter. Use your mindchatter to tell yourself, "You can do it in time," or "You do have the power to learn about leading others," and "You can be the boss everyone wants to work for." And it's really important to use "you," not "me."

## Even the Pronouns Matter

In her book, Dweck discussed the "I" versus "you" pronoun among chief executive officers (CEOs), the people at the very top of organizations. CEOs who wanted validation — superstar or hero status, or wanted others to believe they were the smartest, most talented person in the room — tended to have a fixed mindset. They used the pronoun "I" more.

Others mentioned, like Jack Welch of GE, Anne Mulcahy of Xerox or Lou Gerstner of IBM, had a growth mindset. They hated using the word "I" and preferred to use "you" or "we" or "us" in their writings and speeches. They also emphasized the importance of learning and growing as a leader, not being the smartest and best and brightest in the room. "It's not about me anymore," right? They got it. They flipped their script by flipping their mindset. ●

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## Flip Your Skill Set

As a new leader, when you get promoted to be a boss, it's not about having the skills of an individual contributor anymore. It's not about technical smarts and savvy, knowing the lingo, mastering the program, operating the machine, closing the sale or having the work-arounds at your fingertips. Instead, you need to flip your skill set.

In a study, new leaders took a 360-degree assessment. Over and over again, the following four skills were consistently picked as being more important for success than others as well as being skills new leaders often struggled with more than others: Communication, Influence, Leading team achievement and Developing others.

## Communication — It's More Than Words

As an individual contributor, people look at your work. As a new leader, people look at you — your face, body language, behaviors and actions. Your ability to communicate with others is valued and relevant in accomplishing your work and connecting with your direct reports and other co-workers.

One area new leaders should understand, enhance and improve is nonverbal communication — whether it's getting your point across, tailoring your communication to your audience or saying something other than "Because that's what I said."

When you are talking with others in the hallway, during one-to-one meetings or presentations or anywhere else at work, are you really "saying" what you think you are saying? The actual "words" said really make up a small portion of what's actually being said. Science agrees. Researchers Ray Birdwhistell and Albert Mehrabian believe that nonverbal communication makes up anywhere between 65 and 93 percent of the total emotional interaction between two people. And when the words don't match the behaviors? We believe what's not being said, the nonverbals, rather than the words.

To flip your communication skill set, be aware of every type of way you communicate nonverbally. These ways are what psychologists Steve Nowicki and Marshall Duke, among others, term different "channels" of nonverbal communication. Here are six:

### 1. Rhythm and use of time: not just for music.

Rhythm plays a role in the way you communicate with others. Being "out of sync" with others may cause confusion, anxiety or discomfort for both you and the other person or people you are with. How you organize time and commitments also says a lot about you.

### 2. Interpersonal distance (space) and touch: not being touchy-feely.

There are several "zones" we use for communication, and if someone invades a zone and the rules that are part of them, that causes problems. In the workplace, touch carries extreme meanings and should definitely be used with caution. You don't want a lawsuit on your hands, or a negative

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reputation (i.e., being that person who gives people the creeps).

- 3. Objectics: more than “dress for success.”** Think about your clothes, hair, tattoos, jewelry, cosmetics and fragrance. Many times, it’s the first thing people notice about you, and these objectics may tell people a lot about you in that split second: who you are, what you do, what you believe in, what you support and your own personal values. And you didn’t even say one word.
- 4. Gestures and postures: you reveal a lot with your hands and stance.** You can say a lot with your hands and body without uttering a single word. Your posture can say things as well. If you have a slouched posture, people may think you are tired or disinterested. Hands in pockets may convey boredom. But standing straight may tell others you are attentive, excited, enthused or confident. Leaning in may tell someone you are interested in what is being said.
- 5. Facial expressions: you can read it all over my face.** In face-to-face interactions, a smile, frown, grimace, raising your eyebrows, eye contact — all of that can tell people something that words may not.
- 6. Paralanguage: say what?** This is all the things that make up the sound that accompanies the words. Think about your tone of voice — the loudness, speed and intensity of your speech. Silence (or absence of it) too. And don’t forget those “credibility killers” that ruin your credibility, authority and reputation, like, well, “like” and “you know” and “uh” and “um.” All of these examples are part of paralanguage.

### The Platinum Rule of Communication

The golden rule of “treat others the way you want to be treated,” can be flipped to the platinum rule: Treat others the way *they* want to be treated. It can greatly help new leaders flip their script, communicate better and be the boss everyone wants to work for.

The platinum rule is a good tool to remember when you communicate with others. Say you only want to hear the bare minimum. You’ll tend to converse with others in that manner too. But others (possibly the people who report to you) have a desire to hear more and be engaged in conversations and decisions. They want to be heard. So, flip your script by flipping your communication. Talk with others more, understand what others are feeling, and become more aware of the verbal and, in particular, nonverbal messages.

### Influence

Influence is all about your power, authority and ability to shape or change your audiences’ actions, decisions or opinions. Influence happens all the time at work. If you influence well, you’ll be successful at work. But influence is more than just “Do it because I’m the boss.” The “3 H’s” are three ways that you can influence others:

**Head:** Influence people using rational approaches. Use your intellect, reason, logical arguments and facts.

**Heart:** Influence people using emotional appeals. Let people know how a decision will affect their own lives, work, values, beliefs or those of the people around them.

**Hands:** Influence people using a connection you have with them. Work together to accomplish a common goal.

The one big takeaway to flip your script by flipping your influence skill set? Follow the platinum rule — influence others the way *they* want to be influenced.

Though you may love talking about data, others may be bored to tears when they hear it. Maybe that’s the way you’ve done it before, and your influence attempts fell short. Now is your chance to flip your influence skill set by talking about values, beliefs and feelings (“heart”) or through reciprocity and collaboration (“hands”). ●

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## Flip Your Relationships

When you officially become part of management, you start wearing the imaginary T-shirt that says, in big bold letters, “Leader” across your chest and the imaginary hat that has “Boss” stitched in, and everybody can spot your new wardrobe. Once that happens, people immediately see you differently. Adjust, get used to it and flip your script.

When you flip your script by flipping your relationships, you now pay attention to others, their needs and their well-being. There are two major relationships you have to flip: one with your peers (some, your friends) and one with your team.

### From BFF to Boss

Many new leaders have difficulty displaying authority, particularly to those with whom they have a history and friendship. It’s the biggest challenge new leaders have, and many just don’t know how to go about flipping that relationship. Here are four ways to get you started:

**Be clear.** It’s your job as the boss to talk about the new responsibilities you face in your new role and to set clear expectations and boundaries from the start. Explain that you are accountable for the development and performance of everyone who reports to you, not just your BFFs.

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**Be aware.** People will observe, notice and go so far as to scrutinize every decision you make (or don't make), and whom you give your time and attention to (or whom you don't). Be aware of what you are doing and not doing. Build high-quality relationships with as many of your subordinates as possible.

**Be fair.** New leaders (and many well-seasoned ones too) often treat some followers differently than others. And that's okay, so long as you treat everyone fairly. Treating everyone equally isn't mandatory. You don't have to give each and every subordinate you have the same amount of equal time. You don't have to give equal bonuses or raises for every individual on your team. In fact, research indicates that treating everyone in a group the exact same way may be as dysfunctional as treating a few selected people especially well. If you develop higher-quality relationships with some employees and not others, base those relationships on merit, not blatant favoritism. If some are provided opportunities to grow and expand in their roles and responsibilities, and if they receive development, support, encouragement and rewards *based on their performance*, then different levels of treatment actually represent your fairness.

**Be prepared.** When you go from BFF to boss, the friendship as you and your BFF knew it has ended. It's over. Done. You and your friend must choose whether a new relationship begins. If you or your friend can't adjust, be prepared to move on. But don't burn bridges. You never know who may be leading you one day.

## Why You Should Flip Your Relationships with Your Team

Two things describe effective leaders: They get the job done, and they are really good at relationships.

With task-oriented behaviors, you lead others doing the work. You drive results, helping others be productive and complete work efficiently and effectively.

Relationship-oriented behaviors are all the things leaders do to make others feel comfortable. It's not just about being friendly. Flip your script by understanding the importance of the relationships you have with your team.

When you are the boss, you can make or break your team's effectiveness, performance and ability to learn not just by leading them in doing the work, but especially through building your relationships with team members.

Anytime you have a collective of people with shared work, such as the teams you lead, you know that leadership is happening when you see three outcomes: direction, alignment and commitment.

Each and every person on your team should agree with what the team is trying to achieve and that the goal is worthwhile.

Each person should know his or her roles and responsibilities and what others are doing.

Each person should be dedicated to the work and committed to the team.

It is your responsibility to check in with your team, both individually and as a collective. ●

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## Flip Your 'Do-It-All' Attitude

As a new leader, your work is different. The work you once did won't earn you recognition and won't make you a successful leader. So what do you do? What's your script?

First, you don't do all the work anymore. Second, you develop others.

Some new leaders feel they must do the work because there is not enough time or resources to get the work done. But many others do the work because they know it better than everyone else.

According to teams expert Dr. Eduardo Salas and his colleagues, team members should have all the information they need at their fingertips to get the job done and know all the procedures necessary to get the work accomplished. When you flip your "do-it-all" attitude, you drive results and productivity by leading others to perform the work, and you reduce ambiguity and provide structure to the work.

One other thing you do when you flip your "do-it-all" attitude is delegate. You should give someone important work and more responsibility while providing authority, resources and support. And by delegating effectively, you free up your time to do other work that may need more of your attention. You also build trust among the people you delegate work to and provide autonomy.

## Developing Others Is Like a Gift

The people you lead want to know that someone — you in particular — prioritizes their development and growth. Developing others is one of the biggest skill gaps of new leaders, yet the boss everyone wants to work for is known for making time to develop others and believing that developing others is a top priority. Developing others is like a gift, as good to give as it is to receive.

Do these three things to develop others: support others, create goals and give feedback.

**Support others the right way.** Researcher Kathy Kram believes (and dozens of studies affirm) that there

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are two types of support you should provide when you develop others. One is career-related support. Four ways to provide this type of support are build the reputation of people you are developing by bragging about them; help others develop their skill sets; protect others from things they don't need to know; and give them interesting, challenging assignments.

The second type of support you should provide is emotional support. Those you develop often find great support from you that inevitably increases or builds up their competence, identity, self-worth and effectiveness. Two ways to provide this type of support are by (1) being a role model and (2) accepting others for who they are.

**Create goals the right way.** Goals should be (1) specific, (2) difficult, (3) yet attainable, according to researchers Ed Locke and Gary Latham. According to Locke and Latham, specific, difficult, yet attainable goals are linked to reduced absenteeism, fewer injuries and increased production.

**Give feedback the right way.** From this point forward, it's not about "me" and how "I" am doing; instead, flip your attention toward developing others by providing feedback. Providing positive and negative feedback to your direct reports, staff or team is the only way they will know how they are performing well or, if they are not, how they can become better. It's what the boss everyone wants to work for does and is part of your script now. ●

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## Flip Your Perspective

Most individual contributors have a narrow view of what goes on in their organizations. Now that you're a new leader, flip your perspective. See things more broadly. Expand your vantage point.

As you flip your script by flipping your perspective and you start to take on that bigger view, you'll quickly see the organizational politics at play. Your ability to flip your perspective has a bearing on how well you manage politics, how well you work with co-workers and stakeholders (up and down as well as across the organization), how you feel about your organization and how well you do your job.

Those who flip their perspective understand that there are competing interests, scarce resources, ambiguity, unclear rules and regulations and a lack of information. They see it all. They don't let politics get in the way of their goal to bring transparency and clarity to their teams, their co-workers or stakeholders they work with. They remove uncertainty in the environment.

When you flip your perspective in this way, you'll survive — even thrive — at navigating politics in your

organization with your political savvy, and feel good about yourself and the way you do it too.

## What You Can Do to Flip Your Perspective

Here's the skinny: Understand what you want, what others want and determine where there is common ground so everyone wins and benefits. To do that, you need political savvy. There are four different aspects of political savvy that you can develop.

- 1. Read the situation.** Objectively scan, observe and gather information about yourself and the people and the environment around you. You are highly self-aware with your own thoughts and behaviors. You also thoroughly understand the thoughts, behaviors and needs of co-workers and stakeholders you interact with.
- 2. Determine the appropriate behavior before acting.** Based on observations of what is going on around them, politically savvy bosses learn what to do in a given situation. Find common ground and do what needs to be done, so everyone wins something and feels good about the final result. You don't manipulate others to get what you want. Instead, work through the system to ensure everyone's needs are served.
- 3. Network strategically.** Networking strategically is building strategic relationships and garnering support for your goals and those of your co-workers and stakeholders. By connecting with influential individuals who hold different resources and valuable assets, you'll gain a voice where you might not have been heard otherwise. More importantly, you could gain access to important information from key insiders. So what does a strategic network look like? ODD: open (people you know in your network should not all know each other), diverse (people in your network should not all be from the same group or division) and deep (understand what people do, the situations they are in, and their motives, values and needs).
- 4. Leave people with a good impression.** As a boss with political savvy, be sincere and authentic in all that you say and do, and leave people with a good impression. ●

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## Flip Your Focus

Now that you are a boss, your focus must constantly be on your character, integrity and doing what is "right." Let's face it: people look up to leaders and expect a lot out of

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them. You clearly have a lot of power and influence over others. And so you have the potential to affect the lives of people outside of your own. When you flip your focus, you understand that your actions and decisions affect more than just you.

One study investigated the character strengths of integrity, bravery, perspective and social intelligence among 191 top leaders of organizations. The direct reports of these 191 leaders supplied the ratings of the four character strengths, and the bosses (in this case, board members) of the 191 leaders reported on how effective these top leaders were in their jobs. After crunching the numbers, integrity, bravery, perspective and social intelligence each positively related to performance.

The data also showed which of the four character strengths was most important. Integrity came out on top. Character and integrity are even tied to the financial performance and bottom lines of organizations and how people feel about their jobs, too. According to research by KRW International, CEOs rated as having high character, including integrity, had a five times greater average of return on assets than CEOs with low character. They also found that employee engagement was 26 percent higher in organizations with CEOs high in integrity.

### What You Can Do to Flip Your Focus

When you flip your focus, you understand that your impact is bigger. Pay attention to integrity because you need it in many things you do as a new leader. In particular, you need integrity when making decisions and when building trust. Here are some tips to increase your odds of doing the “right” thing when the time comes.

**What would others think?** Ask yourself if the behavior you are about to engage in or the decision you are going to make would be something you want your friends to read about in the local paper or the *Wall Street Journal*.

**Promise and then deliver.** Be clear about what you can do and the timeframe around it. Confidently commit to what you can do. Then deliver on it.

**Learn from why good people do bad things.** We oftentimes don’t do the “right” thing because we don’t fully comprehend the entire situation; we don’t see the big picture or understand the actual choices we can make. Think about the future. Fully understand the possible aftermath of your decisions, and be transparent to all parties involved about why you are making that decision. Also, know the triggers and pressures that prompt making the wrong decision. Research indicates that we are more likely to act unethically when we work in uncertainty; we are under extreme time pressure; we work alone; or there

are big rewards (usually monetary) tied to our work. If you are in any of these situations, you are more likely to go down a path you shouldn’t go or make a decision you don’t need to make. ●

### Stick With Your Flipped Script

Stick with your flipped script, the script of the boss everyone wants to work for, and do not revert back to the “It’s not you; it’s me,” script.

Psychologist Robert Eisenberger believes that if we feel our organization cares for us, we “pay back” the organization through our efforts, increased performance and commitment, and by going above and beyond our jobs to help our colleagues and our organization reach goals.

As a leader, you represent, symbolize and personify the organization to your direct reports. So those who report to you attribute how well the organization supports them based on how well you support them. Shine the spotlight on others.

If the people you lead and serve are successful, you are successful. Think about it. Maybe you are leading a small team right now. If they are successful, you’ll be seen as a driver of results and developer of talent. You’ll be given more responsibility. You’ll lead more people. If they continue to be successful, maybe you’ll lead an entire department, division or function one day.

Ultimately, as leaders, we are called to serve others, help others grow and make the world around us a better place. You have the capability and capacity to make others feel wanted, needed and special at work. You have the power to make them feel valued and appreciated. You can outline exactly what they do and how it matters to you, your organization and even society at large. That’s a rare commodity in organizations right now.

You have the potential and ability to be the boss everyone wants to work for. Now, go do it. ●

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**Webinar: *360 Degrees of Influence* by Harrison Monarth.** Harrison Monarth provides everything you need to gain the trust and respect of those around you — no matter where they’re positioned in the organizational hierarchy — and expand your influence well beyond your immediate environment.