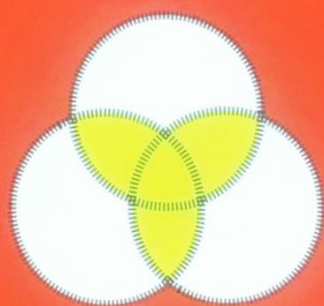


WITH  
A NEW  
PREFACE

# Being the Boss

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THE 3 IMPERATIVES  
FOR BECOMING  
A GREAT LEADER



Linda A. Hill  
Kent Lineback

HARVARD BUSINESS REVIEW PRESS





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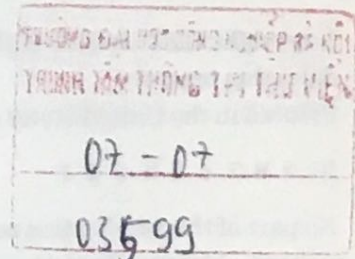
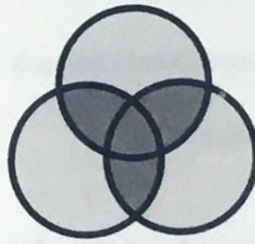
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## PREFACE

It's a common story. Time and again, in our work, we hear from smart, hardworking individuals who are progressing in their careers. They are consistently delivering what is asked of them and carefully avoiding major missteps. Yet, when it comes time for the big promotion, they are passed over, leaving them to wonder what went wrong. The problem is rarely a performance issue. Too often, managers get derailed, quite simply, because they misunderstand what leadership is about.

When we published *Being the Boss* in 2011, we sought to provide guidance for how managers can contribute to organizational performance and build a fulfilling career in an environment beset with rapid change. We wanted to help them avoid all too common mistakes—traps the most talented and well-intentioned are hardwired to fall into. Leadership as we knew it was (and still is) evolving to deal with transformative changes in the workplace. Thanks to ever-emerging technologies, globalization, and demographic shifts, organizations recognized that they needed to be more agile, collaborative, and purpose-driven. More and more work was being done virtually, by temporary and diverse work teams comprising members from across and even outside the organization. More and more was being asked of our companies—people craved “meaningful work” and society expected organizations to be profitable *and* have a positive impact on communities. For this more fluid and complex environment, we sought to provide prescriptive, strategic insights that were not only genuinely



useful but would also retain their value in years to come. The best approach, we thought, was to find the underlying, unchanging essence of leadership and build *Being the Boss* around it.

That essence, the most basic task of leaders everywhere, we said, is to *influence* others, not just those who report to them but also their peers and colleagues and even their superiors—everyone they and their teams rely upon to accomplish what needs to get done. This is where the leaders in our opening story went wrong. Many were so focused on exercising formal authority over the people who reported to them—their teams—that they neglected to invest in building the broad network of relationships they needed to ensure that their teams had the resources necessary to achieve what are ever more demanding stretch ambitions.

When we wrote *Being the Boss*, we identified not one but three levers—we called them the *3 Imperatives*—that enable leaders to exercise influence and fulfill their responsibilities. They are:

- *Manage Yourself*—Trust is the foundation of great leadership, the glue that holds people together through challenging times. In order to inspire trust in the people you lead, you need to understand how they experience you; people need to see your competence and character. Leadership is about being present and matching your intent with your impact, goals elusive to those who are not self-aware and willing to learn how to manage themselves.
- *Manage Your Network*—Only by building a web of reciprocal relationships with people inside *and* outside your organization—people over whom you have no formal authority but on whom you are deeply dependent—can you ensure that you and your team will have the knowledge and resources that you need. Leadership is as much about interdependency (with subordinates, peers, superiors, customers, and other external stakeholders) and responsibility as it is about authority.
- *Manage Your Team*—It is no longer enough to have people who play on your team; you need the people who report to you to play *as* a team. Unleashing the talents of your team and getting them to work together means that you must develop



people, both individually and collectively. If you neglect this imperative, you can't delegate and leverage yourself; you won't have the time or energy required to manage the other two. Leadership is not simply getting every one-on-one relationship right with your people, it is about building the culture needed to deliver on ever more demanding priorities.

In the years following the book's publication, we have found that this fundamental approach to leadership has resonated with diverse audiences: from Silicon Valley start-ups to multinational legacy businesses; lower-level managers to C-suite leaders; leaders with formal authority to leaders of ad hoc cross-organizational initiatives. For leaders around the world, the 3 Imperatives provide a useful way to clarify what managers must do to execute as well as adapt.

Perhaps not surprisingly, we find that the most often overlooked of these imperatives is managing your network. The need for trust and teamwork is widely recognized these days but, prior to reading *Being the Boss*, many told us they typically saw networking as organizational politicking, a distasteful task that had to be done because something was broken about their companies. In fact, in today's world, networking is what allows you to develop both contextual intelligence—to scan and sense the competitive environment to determine what your priorities should be—and emotional intelligence—to build the relationships required to fulfill those aspirations. Without a network you will be powerless. And there is nothing worse than working for a powerless boss. Moreover, powerlessness is corrupting: you cannot give voice to your values, which can lead to behavior you're not proud of. For many leaders, even CEOs, seeing networking highlighted as one of the 3 Imperatives of *leadership* was something of a revelation.

Managing your network is becoming more important now than ever. Leading change today, and in particular leading innovation, requires an enterprise-wide mindset and the ability to work across and outside the organization, even to build cross-industry and cross-sector ecosystems. We've seen many firms that direct significant resources to creating something new and useful but lack leaders with the networking skills needed to scale an innovation by building out crucial coalitions.



For over a decade, Linda has been chairing an executive education program for high potentials. Those nominated by sponsoring organizations have come from over thirty countries. To drive the design of that program, Linda and her colleagues have done interviews of the C-suite, asking, "What does it take to be a high-potential leader in your organization today, and what did it take ten years ago?" What they hear is that today it is not enough to be a value creator. To be considered a high potential, you must also be a game-changer in your organization. High potentials today are those with the ability to create value *and* change the game—that is, they must be skilled at executing for today and adapting and innovating to deliver for tomorrow. A value creator is someone who has the ability to deliver on the "contract" they have made with customers. Value creation is a formidable challenge these days. Your team and network aren't easy to get aligned and customers can be exacting and unforgiving in their expectations. Game changing is about anticipating future possibilities and proactively going "beyond the contract," as one CEO put it. It is about being willing and able to innovate, to take calculated risks—perhaps making a misstep but learning fast, adjusting, and moving forward. Your organization is counting on you to stop playing it safe. Otherwise, competitors, often from different industries and geographies, will take your business.

Leadership has always been hard, and in a world in which the competitive rules are being upended, we know it's getting harder. It can be difficult to figure out what's truly important. Thus, it is no accident that the first of the 3 Imperatives is managing yourself. Leading is about using yourself as an instrument to influence others to get things done and fulfill your organization's ambitions. Good is not good enough; great is what is needed. We all need to keep learning and adapting. No one can teach you how to lead, but you can learn how to lead. *Being the Boss* is meant to be a guide for your leadership journey, so it begins and ends with you. Where are you on that journey? Where do you need to go next and how are you going to get there? We have been gratified to hear from managers all across the globe that our simple framework is robust enough to help you figure out where to focus your time and attention, as well as to continue to develop yourself and serve as a catalyst for your company's continued success and growth.



## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Many hands write a book, and this one is no exception. We're grateful for all the help and advice we received along the way. Whatever merits *Being the Boss* possesses are due in large part to the time, effort, and advice generously given by others.

We deeply appreciate those who read the manuscript—no small task—and offered their thoughtful comments: Greg Brandeau, Joline Godfrey, Benjamin Esty, Boris Groysberg, Rakesh Khurana, Anthony Mayo, Tom DeLong, Henry Mintzberg, Sandra Gittlen, Peter Naegeli, Susan Anastasi, Christopher Galbraith, Kwan-Kit Lui, and the anonymous readers the Press enlisted. Three reviewers focused on the story that opens each chapter: Bonnie Binkert, Robin Heyden, and Cinny Little. Their comments, details, and corrections made it far better than it would have been without their assistance.

Others who helped in essential ways include our always thoughtful editor, Jeff Kehoe, whose calm patience and good advice never failed us; Carol Franco, agent and wife, who read every chapter in its multiple forms and always managed to combine encouragement with high standards; Emily A. Stecker, Linda's research associate, who supported Linda from the beginning and whose careful and insightful readings of the manuscript along the way were invaluable; Barbara Devine, whose steady hand throughout helped us in many ways, not least in bridging the distance between Boston and Santa Fe; Jennifer McNamara, who helped us in preparing the manuscript; and Carla Fantini, who