

UNDERSTANDING AUTHORITY AND GETTING AHEAD

Most businesses have a hierarchical management structure. That is, there is a boss — usually the owner or manager of the company — at the top, and then there are layers of people who have different amounts of responsibility underneath.

All employees are under the leadership of another person. At a large business, there could be four or five levels of reporting in the hierarchy. Small businesses with fewer than ten staff will usually just have a boss, someone who is second in charge after the boss, and then the rest of the staff.

When you start a job at entry level, you will most likely have a supervisor you report to. They will allocate you tasks, make sure you have the tools to do the job and check in regularly to make sure you are on task. That means they want to make sure you are doing what you are meant to be doing. This doesn't mean they don't trust you, however; it means they need to make sure their instructions were clear and that you understood how the job was to be done.



When you start at the bottom, you don't get much say in what is to be done or how. You need to work hard and show your boss that you are smart and a hard worker and that they can trust you to work independently.

Employers are always on the lookout for employees who demonstrate leadership amongst their peers. Not in a bossy/pushy way but rather in an inspiring and motivating way.

There are some things you can do to earn workplace authority (power and influence) and get ahead. Here are some traits and skills employers are looking for:

- A relaxed and easy camaraderie with workmates
- An ability to inspire and encourage others
- A way of communicating that encourages others to listen
- A relaxed and respectful relationship with the boss
- A great work ethic (e.g. prepared to go the extra mile)
- Initiative (e.g. always on the lookout to jump in and help others or pick up tasks that need finishing)
- An honest and trustworthy approach with people
- Humility and generosity (e.g. the ability to put others' needs before your own)
- Curiosity and a willingness to learn — that is, having a real interest in the business you are working in
- Courage (e.g. the willingness to speak up if you believe something isn't right)



Positives & Negatives Activity

1. What are the positives and negatives of working at a small business compared to a large one?



2. What are the possible positives of working at a small business (one boss, 3–10 staff)?

3. What are the possible negatives of working at a small business?

4. What are the possible positives of working at a large business (4 management levels, 60 staff)?

5. What are the possible negatives of working at a large business?



6. How motivated would you be to work towards getting a promotion once you get your job? There is no right or wrong answer.

- a. No motivation at all. Would not want the extra work or stress.
- b. Low motivation. I am shy and would feel too nervous to even go for a promotion.
- c. Medium motivation. I am a team player without big ambitions, but if the offer was made, I would probably take it.
- d. Pretty motivated. Getting ahead and earning some extra money would be good.
- e. Very motivated. In everything I do, I like to excel and be the best I can be.



7. Do you think your answer to #6 above would change if you were in your 30s and had a family to support? Yes ☐ or No ☐

Why or why not?

8. How would you rate yourself with the ten skills employers look for in an employee when considering promotions?

Rate yourself using this scale:

1. I don't demonstrate this skill very often
2. I demonstrate this skill some of the time
3. I demonstrate this skill most of the time
4. Not applicable

☐ A relaxed and easy camaraderie
with workmates

☐ Initiative

☐ An ability to inspire and
encourage others

☐ An honest and trustworthy
approach with people

☐ A way of communicating that
encourages others to listen

☐ Humility and generosity

☐ A relaxed and respectful
relationship with the boss

☐ Curiosity and a willingness
to learn

☐ A great work ethic

☐ Courage

9. Which of the above skills would you most like to improve on and why?
