

How to talk to your boss about how you like to be managed

The relationship between you and your manager is one of the most important working relationships you have.

Your manager often plays a key part in what you work on, the way you work, and how you interact with others.

But different managers have different leadership styles – and that's where things can get difficult. You might even find that you clash, and start to resent the way your manager does things.

But what if you could talk about it with them instead? Here's how to have a conversation with your manager about the way you like to be managed.

Recognise if your working styles are different

Only half of employees (51%) feel that their manager's current leadership style resembles how they like to be managed, according to research for SEEK.

Leah Lambart, career coach at [Relaunch Me](#), says managers and employees often have different ways of working, but that communication is key.

"We all have different personalities, different communication and working styles and not everyone is going to gel," she says.

"If we don't recognise or discuss these differences, they can have a huge impact on employees and managers, both personally and professionally".

Lambart says some people end up feeling their manager doesn't like them, can lose confidence or enjoyment in their role, and may even start to look for work elsewhere.

Managers should recognise the way their employees work and adapt to their needs – but often, they're unaware of what they are. That's where talking about it can help.

But just 49% of employees feel comfortable talking to their manager about their preferences. Discussing how you like to work with your manager might not feel easy at first, but it's important, Lambart says. Here she shares how to go about it.

Understand your preferences

Some [employees are more aware of their needs](#) and find them easier to talk about than others, Lambart says.

You might know, for example, you need a quiet working environment without distractions. In this case, you might ask your manager to work from home more often or sit in a quieter part of the workplace with headphones in.

Other people find they don't know how to explain what motivates them, what management style they prefer, or what they need to work well.

In this case, [a test or assessment might help](#), Lambart says. She uses a personality-based career assessment in her coaching to understand people's preferred work environments.

These kinds of assessments can help to find out if someone is analytical and needs clear instructions, or whether they're creative and happy to work off a broader idea. Or, if someone is motivated by problem solving, achieving results or by relationship building, or whether they prefer structure or flexibility and independence.

"These kinds of assessments can be a really effective way for [employees to understand what they need](#), and for managers to understand that too," she says.

Request the chance to talk

Once you better understand your needs, you can think about how to approach a conversation with your manager.

A performance review can be the ideal time, but if that's a long way off, you may want to arrange a chat with your manager to talk through some ideas you have around being more effective in your work.

"It can be helpful to say you've done some self-assessment or even worked with a coach to better understand how you work best, and feel that with a few tweaks you would be able to perform to your full potential," Lambart suggests.

Or you may want to be more specific in that initial meeting request about some issues you may be experiencing so the manager has the chance to prepare.

"You may say that you've identified that you have different ways of working or communicating, and think it would be a great idea to get together and talk about how you both work best."

Keep the conversation positive

In the conversation, it's important not to criticise the manager's way of working. Instead [focus on yourself and the ideas you have](#) that will make you more effective, Lambart says.

"What's really important is that it doesn't get personal. It's just recognising the differences and focusing on what type of working style or communication style you need to perform at your best."

Providing examples can be helpful, she adds.

"You may like to explain that you prefer more detailed instructions or prefer a new task to be broken down into small steps."

The approach may be slightly different depending on whether you're a new or established employee, and how long your manager has been in the role, Lambart says. If there's an established relationship, hopefully you're more aware of how each other prefers to work.

"For new employees or new managers who may not know each other well, the conversation acts as an opportunity to get things out in the open before there are any problems."

Make sure to follow up

After your conversation, it's important to put any changes in place then follow up and report back on whether the changes are working, Lambart says.

This gives you a chance to say if the changes are making a difference.

"It also allows you to show the evidence of this change and how it's made you more productive or allowed you to improve your wellbeing at work," Lambart adds.

Clear and positive communication about how you like to work and be managed can improve your relationship with your manager.

But sometimes, despite your best efforts, it can become clear that things just aren't going to work. "Maybe the manager you know isn't able to change and you have to move onto a different role," Lambart says.

"But if you have that open conversation, at least you know you've tried."

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