

Insecure, threatened managers treat subordinates unjustly

 By [Refilwe Thobega](#)

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I have just stumbled across two articles that I wrote in 2009. One was a piece on why organisations failed to retain their young and fresh talent. A phrase said: "While 61% of employers worldwide say they have challenges recruiting and keeping young employees, new research shows that the young are idealists who want ethical employers. Young members of staff want ethical employers and training, and will work for less pay if treated well. This is according to research published by Pricewaterhouse Coopers in 2009".

Another piece was a feature on one remarkable and successful lady in the media field. I interviewed one of her former subordinates to get a broader picture of who she really was. I wanted to know what other people around her thought about her and how their experiences had been while working with her.

Her former subordinate, among all the other great things that she said about her, mentioned that: "She's good to have as a boss, as she's never threatened, and thrives on growing people, which means that she'll always give full autonomy to her staff to do their jobs, but she will be there to give direction if needed. She has an in-depth knowledge of business systems/management, journalism/communication and broadcasting. She's an inspiration to me, and I learnt a lot from her."

What sticks in my mind from this quote is that "she is never threatened..." And of course, when you are not threatened by your subordinates you will "thrive on growing" them.

South African industries need more managers of that calibre - managers who are not insecure and threatened by the new, fresh, creative and bright talent in the office.

Unjust treatment

Bosses who are insecure and threatened treat their subordinates unjustly. Someone I know, who's into finance, has just got a new job. I asked her if she was settling in nicely. "The money is good, compared to my previous job. But I hate it. I am already looking for a new job," she said.

I thought: Are you serious? It hasn't even been a month.

She told me all the terrible things that this boss was doing. Any sane and healthy person in her shoes would want to leave as well. We both tried to analyse the manager's behaviour for a short while, then she simply concluded: "Maybe she's threatened". And guess what? Her case is not unique.

I have heard of many "boss-hates-subordinate" stories and I know many young and ambitious professionals who are complaining of "horrible bosses". I don't have to be a psychologist or a sage to celebrate that fear and insecurity are two of the causes of hate, spite, backstabbing and conniving in many boss-subordinate and other workplace relationships in many organisations - be it government or the private sector.

Creativity needs fertile grounds

How does any manager in their right mind compete with his/her subordinate when they should be mentoring and coaching them?

Of course I've also known and heard of great managers who motivate and encourage their staff. And I take my hat off to them.

Young professionals' brilliance and drive are chipped off by bosses/managers who swat them at every opportunity they get. Creativity needs fertile grounds. Magnificence thrives in self-assured spaces. Young professionals need conducive and nurturing environments. Young voices want to be heard. Managers need to allow them to shine, to be bright, free and daring, while giving them space to err - that's how they learn.

Most managers adopt the "I have been doing this for ages ..." attitude. Well, ok, that's fine, but maybe they should be open to new perspectives. To produce excellent results and to reach targets, boss and subordinate have to be a team - there is no any other way around it. Everybody needs managers who is "good to have as a boss, as she's never threatened, and thrives on growing people, which means that she'll always give full autonomy to her staff to do their jobs, but she will be there to give direction if needed." Don't you think?

ABOUT REFILWE THOBEGA

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