

# How Managers Get So Stupid

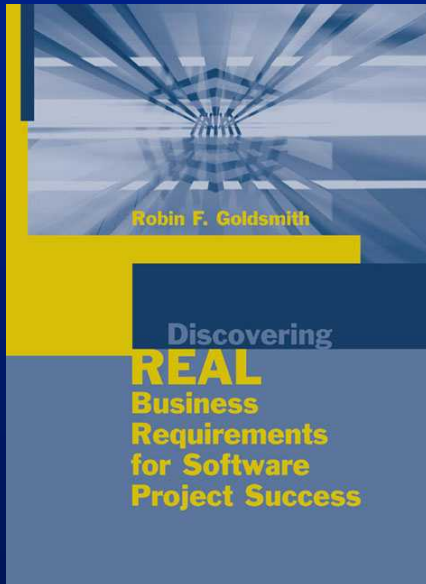
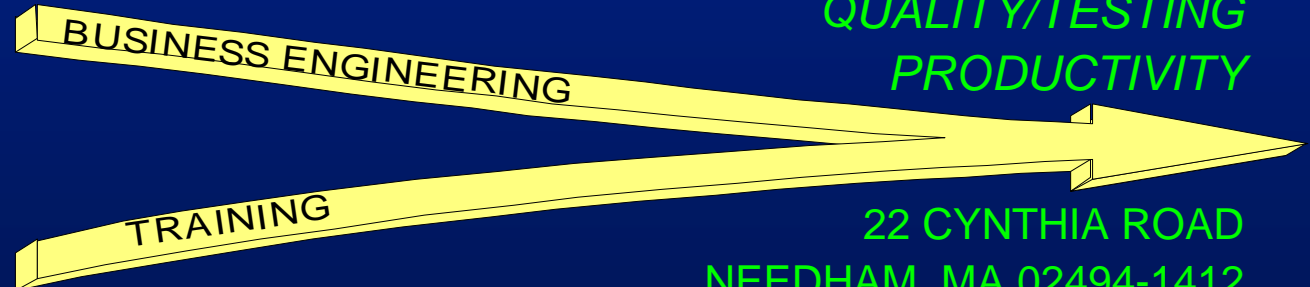
Robin F. Goldsmith, JD

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# *My Boss Is an Idiot*

Is Your Boss an Idiot Too?

Boneheaded bosses aren't just in Dilbert\* or on "The Office"

*But, I'm self-employed!*

\* P.S. Why I don't include cartoons in my talks any more

# Objectives

- Describe some (probably too) familiar situations where managers seem to act stupid
- Suggest some possible reasons why formerly capable people turn stupid, or at least appear to
- Encourage ideas about how to deal with it  
(before we get stupid too)

# Employees' Own Ranking of Workplace Needs vs. What Their Supervisors Thought Workers Said

PC Week Feb. 3, 1997

	<u>Employees</u>	<u>Managers</u>
Interesting work	1	5
Full appreciation for work done	2	8
Feeling "in on things"	3	10
Job security	4	2
Good wages	5	1
Promotions/growth opportunities	6	3
Good working conditions	7	4
Personal loyalty to workers	8	6
Tactful disciplining	9	7
Sympathetic help with personal problems	10	9



From **Superworker**

To **Supervisor**

To **Superfluous**

# *I Must Be Right,*

## *Making Me Boss Says So*

- Organizations reinforce perpetuated cycles of
  - Ineffective behaviors (consider boss' role models' skills)
  - Presumption that title reflects and bestows good judgment
- Boss either
  - Is aware but afraid to acknowledge doubts
  - Believes own P.R. (by far the more difficult to deal with)
- Regardless, cultural pressure to act as if right
  - Can't acknowledge insufficient knowledge (or, heaven forbid, inadequate judgment), threatens one's authority
  - Can't even attend training any more, at least not with the troops (now can learn only in elegant surroundings with other bosses)—  
*image that bosses are different* ***Have you become your parents?***

# Why Would a Boss Impose an “Unrealistic” Budget/Schedule?

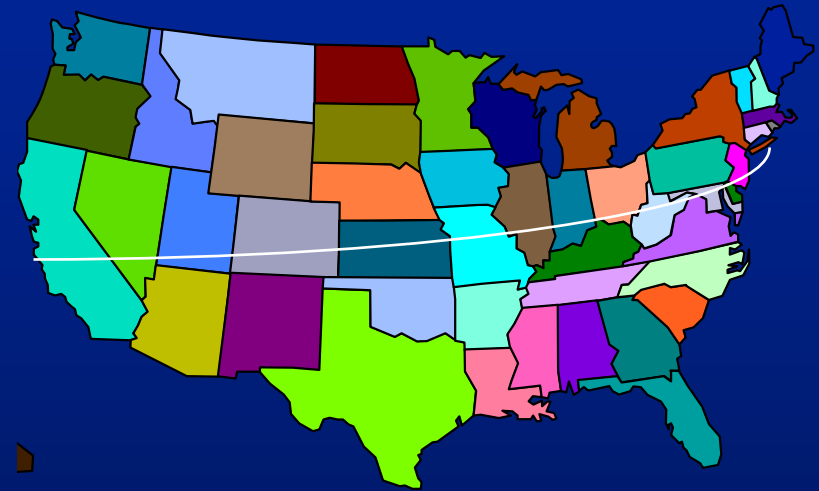


*Boss fails when you fail*

- Just passing along legal or business constraints
- Misunderstands work
  - Need for requirements, testing, etc.
  - Seems simple
  - “Double whammy” rule of thumb
- Doesn’t believe your points
  - We’re not really clear in our own minds on why, what, how
  - Our assumptions are not shared
  - Links to quality don’t register

# Why Bosses Cut Your Estimates

- Establish urgency, counter perception that engineers “cry wolf” and never finish
- Create “motivation”
- Halving your double
- Challenge Parkinson’s Law—  
*Work expands to fill the available time*
- Perceives you don’t have any real idea, so boss’ guess is just as good



*Would you argue with an airline about how long a flight takes? Why not?*



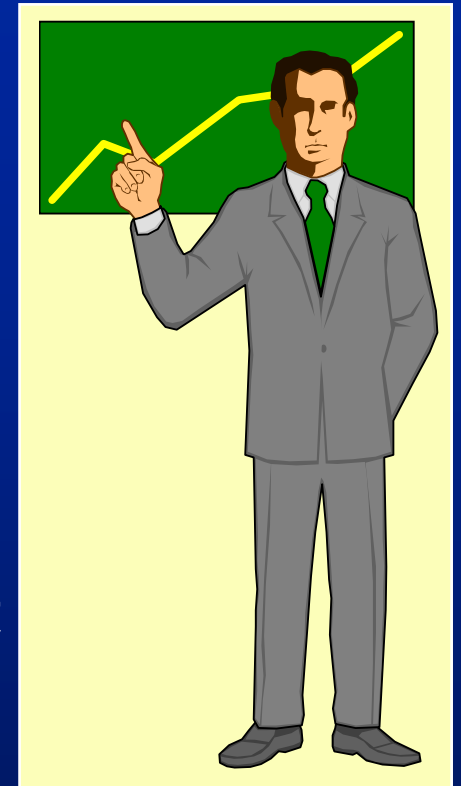
# Neither Estimates nor Estimators Have Relevance or Credibility When



- Estimates are based on *not* delivering fully what is needed, usually because the “estimates” aren’t even thought of as estimates, but rather are just a set of albeit well-intentioned (“trust me, I’m a professional,” “I’m just being realistic”) statements that I will *not* deliver fully what you need
- Makes you part of the problem instead of part of the solution
- You will not find a way to deliver

# *Credibility Starts with Successful End*

- Estimator reasonably knows
  - What is needed in business terms
  - How to make full delivery happen, where actions are tied clearly to results
  - What it will take, manage by facts, empower
- Estimator is committed to make it happen, which opens you to seeing ways to succeed; otherwise you see only ways to fail



*Commitment to Delivering Results is top Critical Success Factor  
Not simply caring or working hard, though both are necessary.  
Projects succeed or fail in the first 15 minutes!*

# Impeding Use of Learning

*Wrong time, wrong folks—“They won’t let us use it”*

- Manager doesn’t know the lessons, of course, or recognize applicability to him/her
  - Meaningful improvement involves doing something different (from behaviors that manager was rewarded/promoted for)
  - Must see *objectively* how and why things are now (that warrant improvement; and *nobody* wants to)
- Effectiveness of training is measured by survey (popularity poll) or test (maybe worse?)



# *Making Work Hell*

- Poor management (often actually poor leadership, or both) is the main reason people leave a job
- The primary cause of poor performance by an individual is that individual's manager, but individual is one blamed
- Confusing management and title with leadership; confusing intent with results

*A survey found that 75 percent of managers felt they were in the top 10 percent in leadership.*

-- Brian Tracy

# *"Managers and Leaders: Are They Different?"*

## *Managers*

- Use power to direct other people
- Attitudes toward goals are impersonal, passive, reactive to necessity
- Conceive work as process to conserve and regulate existing order, limit choices, and have conflicting values accept solutions
- Relations with others according to roles, communicates indirectly and with low level of emotional involvement, seeking win-win

Abraham Zeleznik

*Harvard Business Review* May-June 1977

# *“Managers and Leaders: Are They Different?”*

## *Leaders*

- Use power to influence other people
- Attitudes toward goals are personal, active, shaping to achieve desires
- Conceive work in terms of new options and ideas that excite people to develop choices
- Relations with others are more emotionally intuitive and empathetic, incur love or hate, often intense one-to-one and mentoring

Abraham Zeleznik

*Harvard Business Review* May-June 1977



# *Leadership Effectiveness Is Seen by Its Results--Impact on:*

Participation  
Commitment  
Enthusiasm  
Pride  
Effort  
Perseverance  
Morale  
Making Changes

## **Not by One's Actions or Intent**



# *Leader Behaviors*

- Take initiative, take action
- See the need for a solution and leadership, see/find opportunity
- Set the vision to take the opportunity
- Set goals to accomplish the vision
- Communicate the vision and goals
- Inspire, motivate, and influence others to make commitment to the vision and goals
- Encourage and enable taking action
- Keep people focused, energized, persevering, and on track with respect to vision and goals
- Create the environment for leadership
- Direct, coach, delegate, support, lead the way
- Know when to follow
- Set the example, walk the talk

*Do the right thing vs. Do things right*



# *People Who Think They Are Leaders, But In Fact Are Not, Can Have Negative Effect*

- ❖ Don't recognize needs for true leadership behaviors
- ❖ Impose their own, non-leadership behaviors that are very likely to be creating the situation that needs leadership behaviors
- ❖ When in a position of power, often interfere with others' efforts to exhibit leadership behaviors

*Effective managers assure good leadership is present, even if they don't/can't provide it personally*

# Summary

- We are all probably too familiar with managers who seem to act stupid

- Dooming projects with budgets/schedules
- “They” won’t let us use our learning
- Failing to provide good leadership

- “We is met the enemy, and they is us.”\*

Organizations, managers themselves, and *the rest of us* all make formerly capable people turn stupid or appear to

- Realize your own responsibility for results, show learning’s effects, and be a leader

\*Pogo

*Systems QA Software Quality Effectiveness Maturity Model  
Credibly Managing Projects and Processes with Metrics*

*System Measurement ROI Test Process Management*

Feasibility  
Analysis

**Proactive User Acceptance Testing**

Systems  
Analysis

*Reusable Test Designs*

System  
Design

Develop-  
ment

*Defining and Managing  
User Requirements*

Implement-  
ation

Operations  
Maintenance

*Test Estimation*

*Writing Testable SW Requirements*

Risk  
Analysis

*Proactive Testing:  
Risk-Based Test Planning,  
Design, and Management*

*Re-Engineering: Opportunities for IS*

*Testing Early in the Life Cycle*

*21 Ways to Test Requirements*

*Managing Software Acquisition and Outsourcing:*

> *Purchasing Software and Services*

> *Controlling an Existing Vendor's Performance*

*Making You a Leader*



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- Member of the Boston SPIN and SEPG'95 Planning and Program Committees.
- Chair of BOSCON 2000 and 2001, ASQ Boston Section's Annual Quality Conferences.
- Member ASQ Software Division Methods Committee.
- Member IEEE Std. 829 for Software Test Documentation Standard Revision Committee
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