Bosses: A Field Guide

The Visionary



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Characteristics:	Creates a reality-distortion field that makes people believe the improbable. Commonly found in high-tech and biotech habitats.
Plumage:	Nike Air Jordan 7 Retro running shoes
Archetype:	Steve Jobs
Quote:	"Seriously, this technology is going to *change the world*."
Pros:	Can be highly inspirational, especially if you've got founder's stock.
Cons:	Yells at people who don't share his dream 24/7.
Warning:	You will not have a life.
Care and feeding:	Drink the Kool-Aid. Once you decide that the career points are worth the long hours, throw yourself into the work as if your job is the only thing that matters.

The Climber



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Characteristics:	Desperately wants to get to the top.
Plumage:	Armani Collezioni wool suit
Archetype:	Nicolo Machiavelli
Quote:	"Let's run that up the flagpole and see who salutes."
Pros:	May create an opening for you if and when he's promoted.
Cons:	You're nothing but a rung on his ladder to success.
Warning:	Will dump you like a month-old mackerel if you make him look bad.
Care and feeding:	Make sure the boss knows you understand that your job is to make him look good. Watch his back and feed him tidbits from the corporate grapevine.

The Bureaucrat



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Characteristics:	Believes the world would fall apart without rules and regulations. Found at government agencies, defense contractors, Fortune 100 companies.
Plumage:	White dress shirt, dark tie
Archetype:	Dilbert's PHB (Pointy-Haired Boss)
Quote:	"If it ain't broke, don't fix it."
Pros:	Highly predictable and thus easy to manipulate.
Cons:	Rendered totally ineffective by any major change in the business environment.
Warning:	Can grind your creativity to dead pulp.
Care and feeding:	Learn to love red tape. Keep all activities within the context of what's been done in the past—whether it worked or not. Document everything and share that documentation with everyone.

The Propeller-head



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Characteristics:	Used to be a top-performing engineer.
Plumage:	Casio CMD-40-1ZTER database calculator watch
Archetype:	Bill Gates
Quote:	"Dielectric interference will overload 45nm...even with reticular imaging!"
Pros:	Prefers to communicate entirely through e-mail.
Cons:	Considers all non-engineers to be complete idiots.
Warning:	May draw on wisdom from specific Star Trek episodes during business conversations.
Care and feeding:	Become an expert, preferably in some obscure and highly complicated technology that's absolutely critical to the group's success.

The Fogey



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Characteristics:	Been around since the days when secretaries had typewriters.
Plumage:	Sports jacket with giant 1980s lapels
Archetype:	Peterman (Elaine's boss on "Seinfeld")
Quote:	"I've got a lot of experience stored in my memory banks."
Pros:	Easy going, especially if close to retirement.
Cons:	Has hundreds of anecdotes.
Warning:	You will be bored out of your mind.
Care and feeding:	Cultivate patience. Smile and nod as if you're listening; use the extra time to daydream, plan your day, or fantasize about coworkers.

The Social Director



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Characteristics:	Thinks of the corporate environment as a "community of stakeholders." Often seen at non-profits and healthcare providers.
Plumage:	Tie or scarf with a bright, flowered print
Archetype:	Hillary Clinton
Quote:	"There's cake in the break room."
Pros:	Pleasant and friendly.
Cons:	Avoids decisions that might ruffle feathers.
Warning:	May become cranky under pressure.
Care and feeding:	Build consensus. Line up everyone on the team behind your agenda before bringing it to the boss. Most importantly: be the person who brought the cake.

The Dictator



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Characteristics:	Thinks that "empowerment" means empowering management to give orders.
Plumage:	Military haircut
Archetype:	Dick Cheney or Darth Vader
Quote:	"Because I'm the boss; that's why."
Pros:	Has no problems making decisions.
Cons:	Often makes the wrong decisions.
Warning:	Will chew you out like a drill sergeant.
Care and feeding:	Shut up and go back to work. I'll let you know when I want to hear your opinion.

The Hatchet Man



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Characteristics:	Hired to downsize your organization.
Plumage:	Rolex Daytona
Archetype:	"Chainsaw Al" Dunlap, former CEO of Sunbeam
Quote:	"There is absolutely no truth to that layoff rumor."
Pros:	None.
Cons:	Generally effective at what he's been hired to do.
Warning:	You're in his crosshairs.
Care and feeding:	Update your resume. Unless you work in human resources (which tends to grow during layoffs), chances are you're on the way out.

The Lost Lamb



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Characteristics:	Got over-promoted and now has no idea what to do.
Plumage:	Dresses exactly like the employees being managed.
Archetype:	Michael Scott (the boss on "The Office")
Quote:	"I don't know. What do you think?"
Pros:	Will probably be demoted soon.
Cons:	May remain in place if you help out too much.
Warning:	Is in denial of own ineffectiveness.
Care and feeding:	Do your own work, move your projects forward, get lip-service approval. Sooner or later he'll go away.

Our Hero



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Characteristics:	Competent and knowledgeable yet easy to work with.
Plumage:	Usually a variation of the "casual Friday" look
Archetype:	Tom Hanks (in any role other than Forrest Gump)
Quote:	"Tell me what you're thinking and let's come up with a solution."
Pros:	Actually thinks that managers are supposed to make their employees successful.
Cons:	Will probably get promoted and replaced.
Warning:	Working for bad managers in the future will be even more painful.
Care and feeding:	Enjoy it while it lasts and do your best work. If you make yourself indispensable, she might bring you along when she lands her next job or promotion.