

Don't be just a cheerleader

Advocate for your employees

Are you willing to go to bat for your employees, to fight for them, to defend them from unjust attacks, and to take your fair share of the blame when something goes wrong?

You really are like a coach. Coaches run practices, teach, make out the lineup, plan strategy, and call the plays. You do those things, too—training, assigning work, giving feedback, evaluating performance.

The good coach, at times, argues with the officials on behalf of the players. You may need to do that, too, bringing injustices to the attention of the bosses to get your staff the recognition they deserve and the materials they need to do their jobs.

This takes guts. It's a lot easier to chew out your subordinates and curry favor with your superiors. But, in this case, the harder way is the right way.

Most good coaches perform one more important function; they root, root, root for the home team—loudly, passionately, and publicly. Coaches are their players' most vocal critics, but they're also their biggest cheerleaders.

That's you, coach—the best cheerleader your players will ever have. Share their triumphs and concerns. Exhort them to peak performance. Reward them with your praise. Savor their achievements with them without taking any of the credit away from them.

They may never thank you for it. They may not even notice. Your reward will be their good performance, and their longevity and loyalty to the job. And, remember, when they look good, you look good.

Keep these three keys in mind when advocating for your employees:

Don't take the credit: We've all seen too many press conferences and awards ceremonies where the boss steps into the spotlight and takes all the bows. That's only fair if the boss did all the work. Bring the folks who did the sweating up on stage.

Don't deflect the blame: If it happens on your watch, it's your responsibility. Take the hit in public,

and instruct the employee who made the mistake in private.

Make your employees look good: When you do, they make you look good. And you earn their trust and loyalty.

“Would your workers say you’re a ‘stand-up boss’? There’s no higher praise they could give you.”