

## The Votes Are In: Bosses Can Keep Their Jobs

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By Pamela Babcock

Business leaders, take heart: Most of the respondents to a recent survey (66 percent) said they'd "re-elect" their boss if given the opportunity.

Nearly two-thirds (63 percent) said their boss handles stress and adversity well, while 51 percent believe that their boss's management style brings out the best in their work. And about half (49 percent) said they wish they had the same or similar traits as their boss. The survey was conducted by Harris Interactive on behalf of Randstad US, an Atlanta-based global staffing company.

### What's Your Presidential Style?

Randstad US chose a presidential hook for its most recent quarterly "US Work Watch" survey, which was fielded in late January as President Barack Obama took office.

Harris Interactive polled an online sample of 4,824 U.S. adults age 18 and older, 2,636 of whom were employed full time or part time, and looked at data by geographic region, gender and age. It sought to compare management styles to eight presidential personality types. President Obama was not included because he was too new to the office.

A total of 20 percent of respondents described their boss as a "Dominator," or prone to being bossy, demanding and domineering (traits possessed by Lyndon B. Johnson, Richard Nixon and Theodore Roosevelt), while 19 percent said their leader is a "Good Guy" who doesn't get overwhelmed by stress (think Dwight D. Eisenhower and George Washington).

Only 15 percent consider their boss a "Maintainer" who remains focused and works slowly but steadily (George H. W. Bush and Harry Truman). A total of 12 percent consider their boss an "Actor," who is spirited and charming, or an "Extrovert," who is enthusiastic and vivacious (characteristics possessed by Bill Clinton and Ronald Reagan). Only 7 percent believe their boss to be a "Philosopher," or curious and inquisitive type (like Thomas Jefferson and Jimmy Carter).

Employees wished their bosses were most like Clinton and Reagan (28 and 24 percent, respectively) and least like two Georges—George W. Bush (5 percent) and George Washington (4 percent).

### It's Not All Good News

More than half of the respondents (55 percent) said they've changed their work style/habits based on their boss's personality; more Generation Y employees (59 percent) said they did this than employees age 55 and older (45 percent).

Hillary Eaton Pearl, an executive coach and organizational consultant with Pearl Associates in Greenwich, Conn., said she found that fact surprising and encouraging.

"I spend most of my time helping people modify their work style and habits to 'flex' to their boss's personality or that of key constituencies, so I thought that was great news," Pearl said, adding that she believes "that's what you have to do to survive and succeed."

In the survey, 38 percent said their boss is respected for his or her business expertise

"but doesn't have people skills." And when asked whether their boss's personality traits were worthy of impeachment proceedings, 27 percent agreed, although the survey did not allow respondents to say why.

"That's where HR has work to do," Pearl said. "I would look at the 27 percent of people in my company who are behaving in ways that are de-motivating and creating possibly poisonous work environments."

### **What Style Is Your Region?**

The study suggests that there are distinct regional managerial styles. Bosses in the West are most likely to stay focused on the job, work slowly and steadily, and not feel overwhelmed by stress, while in the Northeast, they're most likely to be bossy, demanding and domineering. Bosses in the Midwest seem to be the most spirited and charming, while those in the South are the most enthusiastic and are tied with the Northeast in terms of being the most "psychologically minded," the study found.

Billie G. Blair, Ph.D., a Los Angeles-based organizational psychologist and president and CEO of Change Strategists Inc., isn't surprised that the Midwest and West had the highest number of respondents say their boss "doesn't feel overwhelmed by stress."

Blair said based on her work with CEOs and executives across the U.S., it's both an adopted geographical management orientation style as well as the result of training, education and preparation that results in bosses in the West and Midwest "having a better grip on management."

"Bosses who secure high-level management positions in the West/Midwest are generally more highly scrutinized for their abilities than bosses in the East/South," Blair contends.

Stuart Sidle, Ph.D., an assistant professor and director of the industrial/organizational psychology program at the University of New Haven in West Haven, Conn., said such research can help HR and executives in a number of ways, such as managing culture clash after a merger or preparing managers for a new assignment in a different location, particularly since behaviors that work in one national or regional culture may not be effective in another.

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