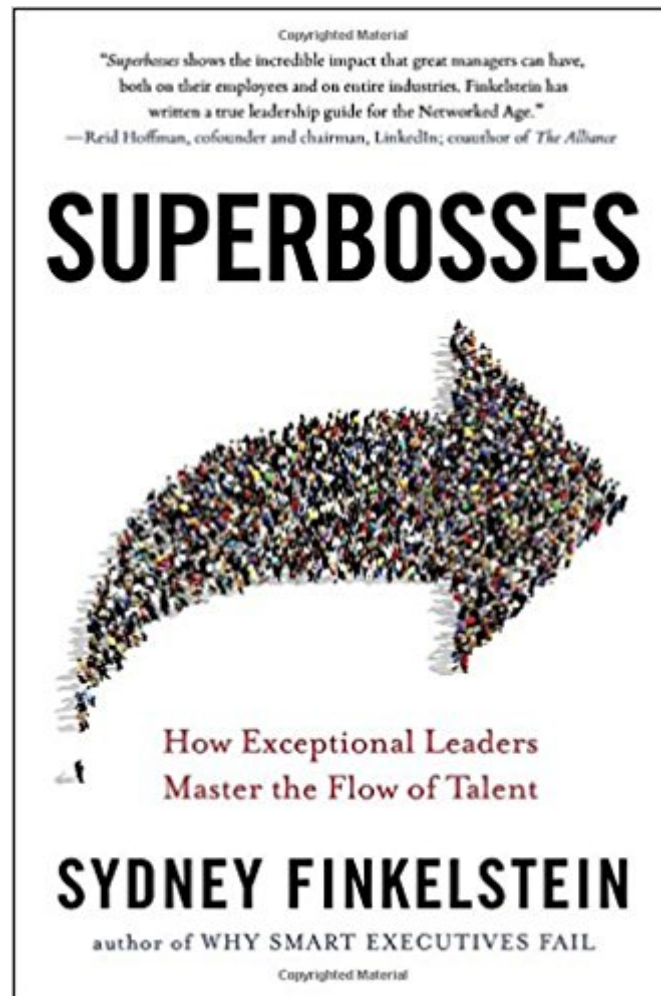




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Superbosses: How Exceptional Leaders Master The Flow Of Talent



Synopsis

"Superbosses is the rare business book that is chock full of new, useful, and often unexpected ideas. After you read Finkelstein's well-crafted gem, you will never go about leading, evaluating, and developing talent in quite the same way."

—Robert Sutton, author of *Scaling Up Excellence* and *The No Asshole Rule*

"Maybe you're a decent boss. But are you a superboss? That's the question you'll be asking yourself after reading Sydney Finkelstein's fascinating book. By revealing the secrets of superbosses from finance to fashion and from cooking to comic books, Finkelstein offers a smart, actionable playbook for anyone trying to become a better leader."

—Daniel H. Pink, author of *To Sell Is Human* and *Drive*

A fascinating exploration of the world's most effective bosses and how they motivate, inspire, and enable others to advance their companies and shape entire industries, by the author of *How Smart Executives Fail*. A must-read for anyone interested in leadership and building an enduring pipeline of talent.

What do football coach Bill Walsh, restaurateur Alice Waters, television executive Lorne Michaels, technology CEO Larry Ellison, and fashion pioneer Ralph Lauren have in common? On the surface, not much, other than consistent success in their fields. But below the surface, they share a common approach to finding, nurturing, leading, and even letting go of great people. The way they deal with talent makes them not merely success stories, not merely organization builders, but what Sydney Finkelstein calls superbosses.

After ten years of research and more than two hundred interviews, Finkelstein—an acclaimed professor at Dartmouth's Tuck School of Business, speaker, and executive coach and consultant—discovered that superbosses exist in nearly every industry. If you study the top fifty leaders in any field, as many as one-third will have once worked for a superboss. While superbosses differ in their personal styles, they all focus on identifying promising newcomers, inspiring their best work, and launching them into highly successful careers while also expanding their own networks and building stronger companies. Among the practices that distinguish superbosses:

- They Create Master-Apprentice Relationships. Superbosses customize their coaching to what each protégé really needs, and also are constant founts of practical wisdom. Advertising legend Jay Chiat not only worked closely with each of his employees but would sometimes extend their discussions into the night.
- They Rely on the Cohort Effect. Superbosses strongly encourage collegiality even as they simultaneously drive internal competition. At Lorne Michaels's Saturday Night Live, writers and performers are judged by how much of their material actually gets on the air, but they can't get anything on the air without the support of their coworkers.
- They Say Good-Bye on Good Terms. Nobody likes it when

great employees quit, but superbosses don't respond with anger or resentment. They know that former direct reports can become highly valuable members of their network, especially as they rise to major new roles elsewhere. Julian Robertson, the billionaire hedge fund manager, continued to work with and invest in his former employees who started their own funds. By sharing the fascinating stories of superbosses and their proteges, Finkelstein explores a phenomenon that never had a name before. And he shows how each of us can emulate the best tactics of superbosses to create our own powerful networks of extraordinary talent.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"Superbosses shows the incredible impact that great managers can have, both on their employees and on entire industries. As masters of career development, superbosses are both talent magnets and launchpads, remaining valued allies with their proteges long after their official relationships have ended. Syd has written a true leadership guide for the Networked Age." •Reid Hoffman, Co-founder and Chairman of LinkedIn, Co-author of The Alliance "I couldn't agree more with Sydney Finkelstein that innovation is part of the leadership DNA. The best bosses •superbosses• must foster a culture of innovation, encourage smart risk taking, remove obstacles, and drive change. They demand world-class performance and empower their teams to achieve it. Superbosses gives leaders a playbook to bring out the best in their people." •Jeff Immelt, chairman and CEO, GE "Superbosses is the rare business book that is chock full of new, useful, and often unexpected ideas."

After you read Finkelstein's well-crafted gem, you will never go about leading, evaluating, and developing talent in quite the same way.

•Robert Sutton, author of *Scaling Up Excellence* and *The No Asshole Rule*

"First and foremost this is a book about leadership--how the best recruit, nurture and build teams of strong leaders. Consider it a beacon, written about Superbosses who manage talent innovatively and achieve unrivaled success in their field--and written for those who want to excel and play at the top of their game. Sydney Finkelstein has nailed it."

•General James Amos, USMC (Ret), 35th Commandant of the Marine Corps

"Superbosses is one of the most important, groundbreaking, and actionable leadership books to hit the market in years. Literally anyone who is seeking to have a positive impact on their organization and to achieve personal success as a natural consequence can apply the powerful yet straightforward concepts in the book starting immediately. Sydney Finkelstein has done the hard work of proving, through deep research and analysis, and showing, through colorful stories and examples, that the way the best leaders succeed is by unleashing creativity, innovation, and motivation through their approaches to hiring and management. But here's the best news: these lessons are teachable and directly applicable, whether you are a chief executive, a soccer coach, or an aspiring young professional."

•James M. Citrin, Author, *The Career Playbook* and *Leader, CEO Practice*, Spencer Stuart

"A smart leader surrounds himself with smart people. Through his book, *Superbosses*, Sydney shows the surprising ways leaders actually find, develop, and grow a team of curious, talented individuals."

•Millard Drexler, Chairman and CEO J.Crew Group

"Maybe you're a decent boss. But are you a superboss? That's the question you'll be asking yourself after reading Sydney Finkelstein's fascinating book. By revealing the secrets of superbosses from finance to fashion and from cooking to comic books, Finkelstein offers a smart, actionable playbook for anyone trying to become a better leader."

•Daniel H. Pink, author of *To Sell Is Human* and *Drive*

"We have long recognised Sydney Finkelstein as one of the world's leading management thinkers. With *Superbosses*, he demonstrates why. It is a riveting, inspiring and practical tour de force."

•Stuart Crainer and Des Dearlove, founders, Thinkers50

"This book could make some bosses angry--and that's a good thing. Finkelstein's examination of what actually makes a legendary leader goes against the grain of much standard management 'best practice' and offers a whole new way to think about talent."

•Kevin Roberts, executive chairman, Saatchi & Saatchi Worldwide

"Complete with valuable information for managers and their subordinates, this

volume provides great advice for the practice of management. •Library Journal
“Superbosses is that rare business book that does more than inform. It’s positively hard to put down.” •Success magazine

SYDNEY FINKELSTEIN is the Steven Roth Professor of Management at the Tuck School of Business at Dartmouth College and the director of Tuck’s Center for Leadership. He is a consultant and speaker to senior executives around the globe, as well as an executive coach, focusing on talent development, corporate governance, learning from mistakes, and strategies for growth. He has published eight previous books, including the Wall Street Journal bestseller *Why Smart Executives Fail*. He is listed in Thinkers50, the world’s most prestigious ranking of leadership gurus.

Roadmap to Success: Navigating the road from Entrepreneur to Leader
Employee engagement costs US business over \$300 billion annually. Sydney Finkelstein’s exceptional book, “SUPERBOSSSES: How Exceptional Leaders Master the Flow of Talent”, will empower companies and managers to positively impact engagement and the bottom line. Finkelstein has written over half a dozen books on management and leadership. This will be one of his best contributions. Peppered with great stories and strategies from in and out of the corporate arena you will be in awe of the similarities and differences. How do SUPERBOSSSES foster a culture of innovation, encourage smart risk-taking, remove obstacles, and drive change? They certainly set the bar high, empower teams, and sometimes eschew conventional leadership practices by staying in the ditches to ensure success. They also understand that in order to leave a legacy they have to win the hearts and minds of the talent they attract, develop, retain, and yes, let go. You would think that all SUPERBOSSSES would have similar mindsets and motivations. That’s where Finkelstein turns our assumptions upside down. Dividing the SUPERBOSS pie into three pieces, he sees that SUPERBOSSSES can be Iconoclasts, Glorious Bastards, or Nurturers. Some iconoclastic SUPERBOSSSES single mindedly pursue their passion, like Alice Waters, Miles Davis, and Ralph Lauren. Glorious Bastards are focused on winning at all cost. Luminaries, like Larry Ellison, Bonnie Fuller, and Michael Milken, teach and reward the price of competition. Nurturers, like Bill Walsh, Norman Brinker, and Mary Kay Ash, enable new generations by their firm and encouraging guidance. All very different SUPERBOSSSES and yet their impact is similar. You’ll find how the five traits of a SUPERBOSS play out in creating great companies and passionate followers. The traits include ;an ability to be confident, competitive, imaginative, authentic, and

relentlessly committed to a vision. These traits and their unique styles are what create the difference between a boss and a SUPERBOSS. Finkelstein's secret Playbook is invaluable for any leader. You'll learn strategies like unconventional interviewing processes, from Alice Waters or Miles Davis; how Bill Sanders and Bill Walsh motivate exceptional people to do the impossible; methods for setting a culture of Master and Apprenticeship, exemplified by Bonnie Fuller and Michael Milken and the art of being a "Hand's On Delegator", like Julian Robertson. While most companies want to retain the best you'll learn the counterintuitive approach of luminaries like Berry Gordy; Roger Corman, Bill and Hillary Clinton. They gracefully let them go to extend their reach and impact. One universal truth among all of these bosses is how each of them is driven by the importance of leaving a legacy. Robert Mondavi's story beautifully illustrates this. Beside the stories and the playbook Finkelstein provides some great assessments tools to point you in the right direction. Certainly, if you have been a student of leadership as long as I have you will have some questions. Here is a couple that comes to mind: "What is the fine line between those who become SUPERBOSSSES and those that simply become narcissistic leaders with blind spots?" I'd love to see a chapter on how these SUPERBOSSSES would score on Emotional Intelligence and Narcissism. It strikes me that it is just a hairpin turn on the road to leadership. Any of these SUPERBOSSSES could have been derailed, as Finkelstein's classic *Why Smart Executives Fail* illustrates if they were not able to manage themselves, manage relationships, and eschew the addiction of narcissism and its concomitant blind spots. "What is the tipping point when someone is extremely confident, competitive, imaginative, authentic, and relentlessly committed to a vision and, as a result, becomes SUPER-SPURNING; not a SUPERBOSS?" These bosses might disengage the majority of talent. The litmus test here is not only the profile of the SUPERBOSS, but the profile of, what I might call, the "SUPERPROTEGE". For SUPERBOSSSES to succeed there must be a cadre of SUPERPROTEGES whose traits include passion, resilience, determination, and ironclad defenses that do not enable the SUPERBOSS to whittle away their healthy self-esteem and drive. SUPERBOSSSES cannot succeed unless the followers are passionate, resilient, and determined enough to pursue the gifts these SUPERBOSSSES have to offer. The art and science of choosing this talent, it seems, is one of the greatest gifts of the SUPERBOSS. These questions will certainly be grist for the mill of a prolific researcher, writer, and contributor to the world of leadership and management like Professor Finkelstein. This book is indeed a great example of him as a SUPERBOSS spawning other SUPERBOSSSES across a myriad of industries by writing a playbook

for them. Finkelstein is a gifted storyteller. He has an ability to synthesize information and experiences, and pull them into a cogent theory to embrace. I wholeheartedly recommend this book for all leaders and students of leadership. Bonni Carson DiMatteo, Co-Founder, Atlantic Consultants Wellesley, Ma[...][...]

I purchased this book after watching Sydney Finkelstein in an interview on one of the local Sunday morning business programs. I listened to Mr. Finkelstein speak about the qualities that great innovators and employers have in common and I knew I needed to get the book. One thing that I found really interesting about Mr. Finkelstein's book is that no matter what industry you work, there are similar qualities in "Superbosses." Mr. Finkelstein uses real life examples ranging from the newspaper industry, Ralph Lauren, Oracle, and chef's from restaurant's like Chez Panisse to define what a Superboss is and does. Whether you are looking at the book because you are interested in data and research or you want to be a Superboss this is worth reading. Mr. Finkelstein doesn't use a lot of jargon and he doesn't use a million big words, he gets to the point and his stories about people he considers at the top of their industries for innovation cultivating talent and hiring practices are very interesting. This definitely will stay on my bookshelf and be highly recommended. I paid full price for this book and am providing this review for informational purposes only.

What makes a great boss? Most people have not worked under bosses that were exemplary and it is probably easier to answer the opposite question. But there are, indeed, some extraordinary corporate leaders out there and they are the subject of Superbosses. This book was written by a guy with extensive experience in the field of corporate management and leadership and his grasp of the subject matter is unparalleled. As the book explains, superbosses are common across American industries and they share common characteristics. They practice open communication. They do not smother their employees with micromanagement. They are able to motivate employees to be their absolute best and they encourage employees to venture out on their own when the opportunity presents itself, knowing that this will, if nothing else, aid the superbosses' own networking efforts. Many individuals are offered as examples of superbosses in this book, and most of the names will be familiar to many readers. San Francisco 49ers head coach Bill Walsh is one example. Another is restaurant entrepreneur Alice Waters and yet another is jazz great Miles Davis. These individuals had a knack for bringing out the best in those who worked for them and the book discusses specific business and personnel decisions these superbosses made and why they were so exceptional, far reaching, and beneficial to all of the parties involved. Reading through this book

and discovering what exactly makes a person a superboss, I realized quickly that the people whom I have worked under, unfortunately for me, did not qualify as superbosses for a multitude of reasons. Many of them, for example, micromanaged everything, which often leads to employee anxiety and distrust. So, I have not had much luck with my own bosses, but the good news is that, knowing what qualities are common to superbosses, I can formulate my own management style to match. I still have some work, but it is good to read about the qualities that make someone a superboss and the incredible impact it can have on morale. Management books are often boring, but Superbosses avoids that label by presenting useful anecdotes and talking about actual people and what they have done, rather than getting wound up on discussion of dull, sleep-inducing management theory. I found many things to like about this book and I recommend it to budding managers and veteran leaders who want to know ways they can improve their skills and approach.

This book had a lot of interesting points. Ordered this book for a book club at work and it facilitated a lot of great conversation. Some of the examples are a little too detached for line managers, but it makes for great talking points.

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