

One Way for Techies to Succeed, Despite Themselves

Meet the new boss -- you.

If you're like most of us, you hate your boss even if they're a nice person and good boss. At heart we're still rebellious kids with "oppositional defiant disorder" who don't want any surrogate mothers or fathers.

And just as most people do eventually become mothers and fathers of their own children, to get rich as a techie you must get over your own rebelliousness and learn to at least be open to becoming the boss over other people.

I know it can be hard. I myself have seen at least four people who decided to take voluntary demotions and go from supervisor back to technical jobs.

But let's face it -- management is the most common and obvious way for techies to step up the career ladder to greater money and achievement.

I have a friend who has a cousin who is a bigshot at Sun Microsystems, the creators of the Java computer language. She told me once that he makes \$600,000 a year. "I don't know what he does, but he's very good at it."

I can guarantee you, he does a lot more than "code in peace."

Bill Gates is not the richest computer programmer in the world because he's the greatest programmer in the world. He is the wealthiest programmer in the world precisely because he hasn't written a line of code in over two decades.

My point is, take responsibility for your career. That does mean getting emotionally comfortable with the idea of giving orders, delegating work instead of performing it yourself, teaching others, giving negative evaluations when they don't perform well, refereeing employee disputes, giving presentations, attending meetings, etc.

You don't want to become the old joke, the great techie who is promoted to being a lousy supervisor.

So prepare now. Read management books. Take classes in management. Attend seminars on management (yes, at your own expense).

Ask your supervisor for help. If they are smart, they want a subordinate ready and willing to take over their job, so they can be promoted.

If your boss is not that smart, find a mentor in the company who is willing to help and guide you.

Practice taking responsibility. Of course, for your own work. In your mind, for your co-workers. If you were Frank's boss and he was 3 days late with a report, what would you do? What would you do about your team's failure to meet the monthly goals? What would you say to them to motivate them to work harder?

Practice saying it to yourself.

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About the Author

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