

Working with a Micro-Manager

Greg Whateley

December 2025

Working with a micro-manager can be challenging and, at times, frustrating. Micro-management often involves excessive oversight, frequent checking-in, and a lack of trust in employees' abilities to complete tasks independently. Many staff find it difficult to work in this controlled environment – and respond in different ways – and not always in a positive way.

What is micro-management

Micro-management is a *leadership style* where a manager closely observes or controls the work of their staff. This behaviour can stem from a desire for *perfection*, fear of *failure*, or *insecurity* about delegation. Recognising the reasons behind your manager's actions can help you tailor your approach. In fact, understanding the management style - in itself - is a form of survival.

Characteristics of micro-managers

Some of the characteristics of a micro-manager include –

- Wanting everything done their way
- Being reluctant to delegate tasks
- Telling you exactly how to do something or doing it themselves
- Not being open to the inputs or ideas of others
- Lack of trust in you to complete the task on your own
- Getting into minute details of day-to-day operations
- Excessively asking for updates on tasks
- Only praising things that are done their way
- Rejecting or correcting things that are done any other way
- Being overly critical of others

This kind of approach/behaviour often leads to a 'toxic' work environment – that in turn either turns staff away or encourages lack of enthusiasm and responsibility. It is sad to see.

Strategies for Effectively Working with a Micro-Manager

There are strategies (not exhaustive) that can be utilised to work effectively in the micro-management environment including -

- Communicate proactively
- Keep your manager regularly updated on your progress
- Clarify expectations
- Ask for clear instructions, deadlines, and desired outcomes

- Document your work
- Keep a record of your tasks, decisions, and communications
- Anticipate needs
- Try to think ahead about what your manager might want
- Stay positive and professional
- Avoid reacting emotionally
- Set boundaries
- Seek feedback
- Focus on outcomes
- Emphasise results

Self-Support

Working under a micro-manager can be stressful. It is important to take care of yourself - at all times; talk to trusted colleagues as a way of release, and (as/if required) seek guidance from HR if your manager's behaviour becomes excessive or affects your wellbeing.

While managing a relationship with a micro-manager is not always easy, understanding the characteristics of the micromanager and using the strategies suggested can help you maintain your professionalism; protect your wellbeing; and continue to deliver great results. Remember - you are not alone, and support is always available if you need it.

Worth reading –

Kesteven, Ferguson and Leong (2024) - Do you have a micromanaging boss? Here's how to work with them - [Do you have a micromanaging boss? Here's how to work with them - ABC News](#)

Gupta (2025) – How to deal with micromanagers - [How to Deal With Micromanagers: What to Say](#)

Emeritus Professor Greg Whateley is currently Executive Dean at the *Sydney International School of Technology and Commerce (SISTC)* Sydney/Melbourne.