THE DIFFERENCE

BETWEEN

BOSS

VS

LEADER

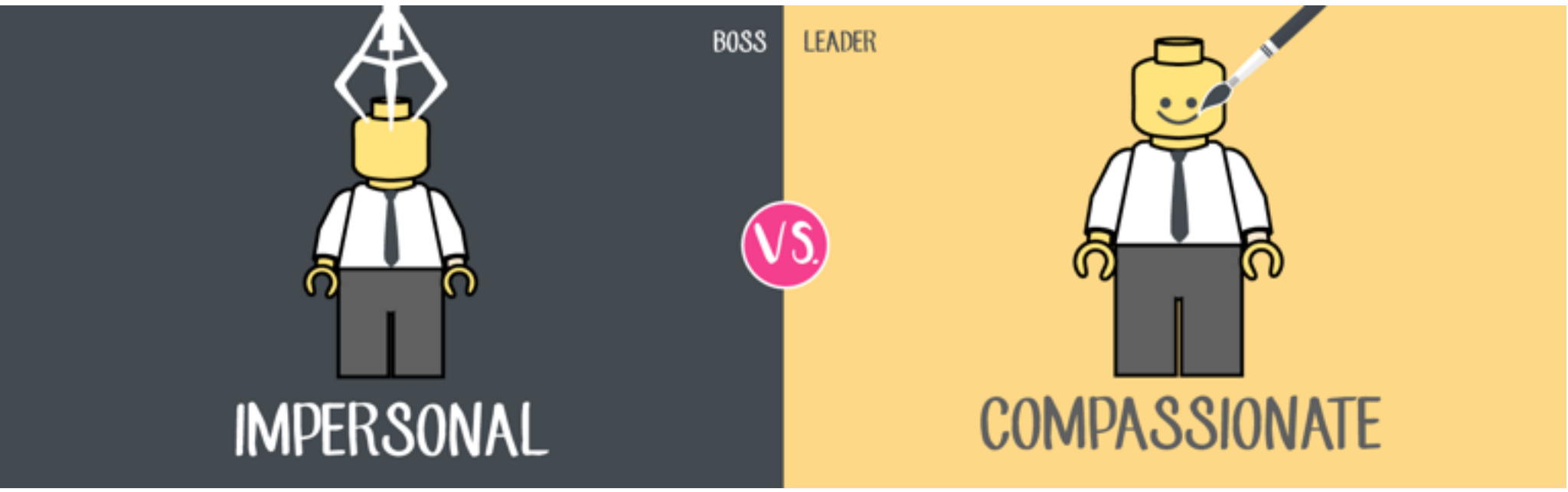
officevibe

There is a huge difference between a boss and a leader. I'd much rather be working for a leader any day.

I've been fortunate enough to have worked with both, and it's amazing what working with someone that you respect and more importantly, respects you, does to boost employee engagement.

Let's go through each of these one by one and discuss how bosses can become leaders:

1. Leaders Are Compassionate



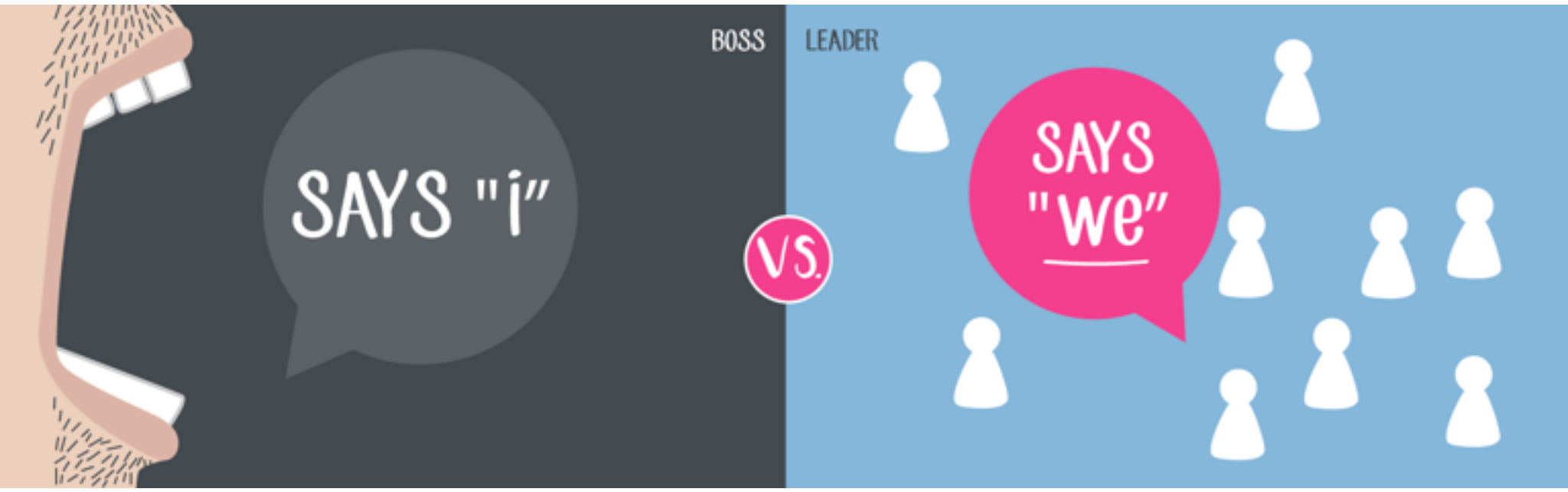
Compassion is one of the most important qualities to have in life, let alone work.

When I spoke to Emiliana Simon-Thomas, the science director at UC Berkeley, I had asked for her opinion about a blog post I wrote called The Most Important Leadership Skill To Have where I argued that empathy was the most important leadership skill to have.

She mentioned that while empathy is important, compassion is the next step, and is actually the most important skill a leader could have. Empathy is great, but compassion is when you actually act on those feelings. If someone is suffering from a cold, it's one thing to feel their pain, and it's another to cook them some chicken soup.

On the other hand, most disengaged bosses that I've had the "pleasure" of working with couldn't care less about how their employees felt outside of work. Or even worse, they would pretend to care, which is obvious to spot.

2. Leaders Are Inclusive



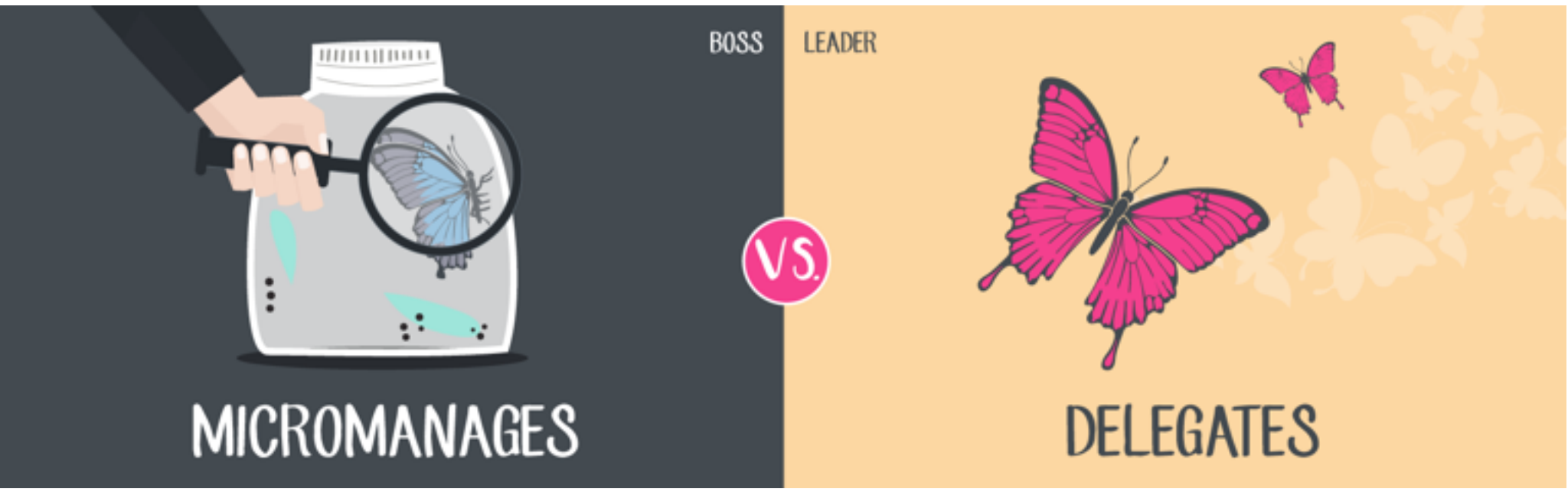
The words we choose to use can have such a dramatic effect on our perception of people.

Something I've been trying to do recently is use the words "we" more often. The reason for this exercise is to enforce more a team-atmosphere. Ideally, we're all on the same page, and no one gets credit for anything. We're all aligned on a collective mission, and the language I use day-to-day needs to reflect that.

Instead of saying “I helped a client set his system up,” I try to say “we helped our client get his system up.” Even if it was only me who did any work, I want every part of my job to feel like it’s a team effort.

Bosses are so focused on the politics of a company and looking good in front of their higher-ups that they use the word “I” for everything.

3. Leaders Don’t Micromanage



Smart leaders know that it’s the people under them that make a company successful, not them.

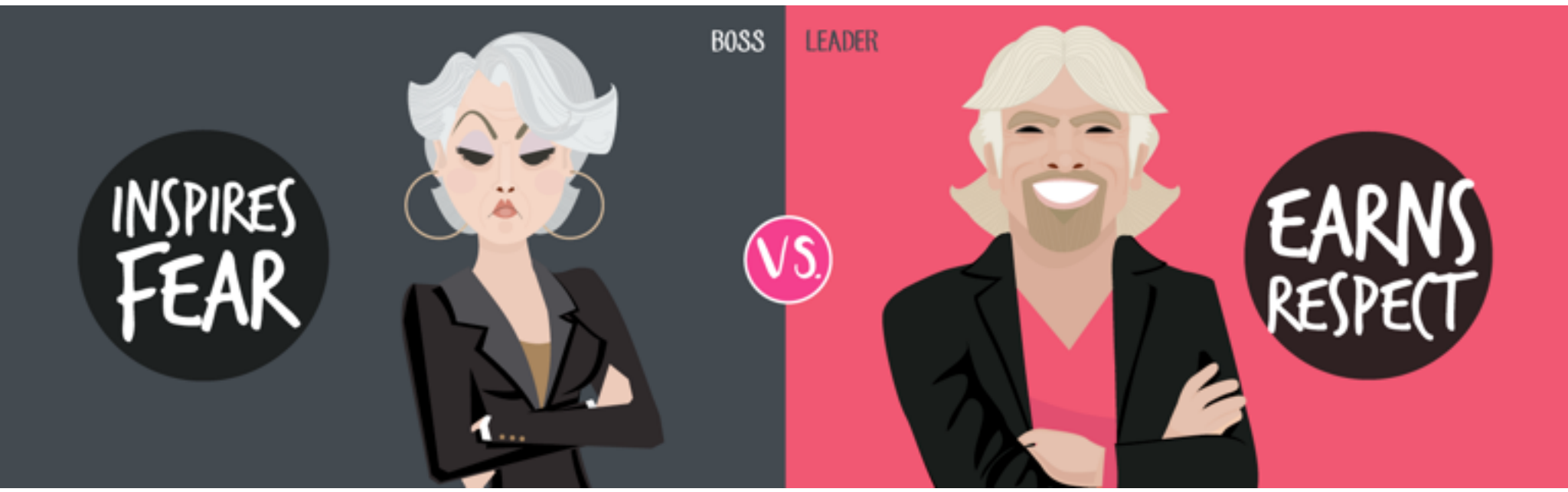
As one person, it’s impossible to progress that fast if you have to micromanage every little thing and not let your team grow and develop. Micromanaging is the worst thing you can do as a boss, for a few reasons:

- It slows your team down
- It doesn’t let employees grow and learn new skills
- It destroys motivation
- It removes you from other big picture work you could be doing

What a smart leaders does, is delegate, and is always there for feedback and to answer any questions. Give employees a high level direction of what you'd ideally like to see, and let them run with it.

For example, if your company has to work on a white paper, you can tell an employee the general subject, a few points you want to make sure are covered, and maybe an example or two of some good white papers you've seen in the past. Remind employees that you're there for them if they need anything and that you'll see where they're at tomorrow afternoon. From there, let them handle it.

4. Leaders Earn Respect



Notice that I used the word "earn". Leaders know that for employees to respect them, they need to earn it over time. But smart leaders work hard early on to earn the respect of their employees.

Here's the secret: give respect to earn it.

If you show your employees the respect they deserve, paying them a fair salary, not counting the time they're at their desk, etc. you'll slowly earn the respect back from employees. Every good relationship is built on a foundation of trust and respect.

On the other hand, bosses have an old school mentality that employees respond well to fear. Spoiler alert: they don't. Yelling and threatening employees will only get them out of the door faster.

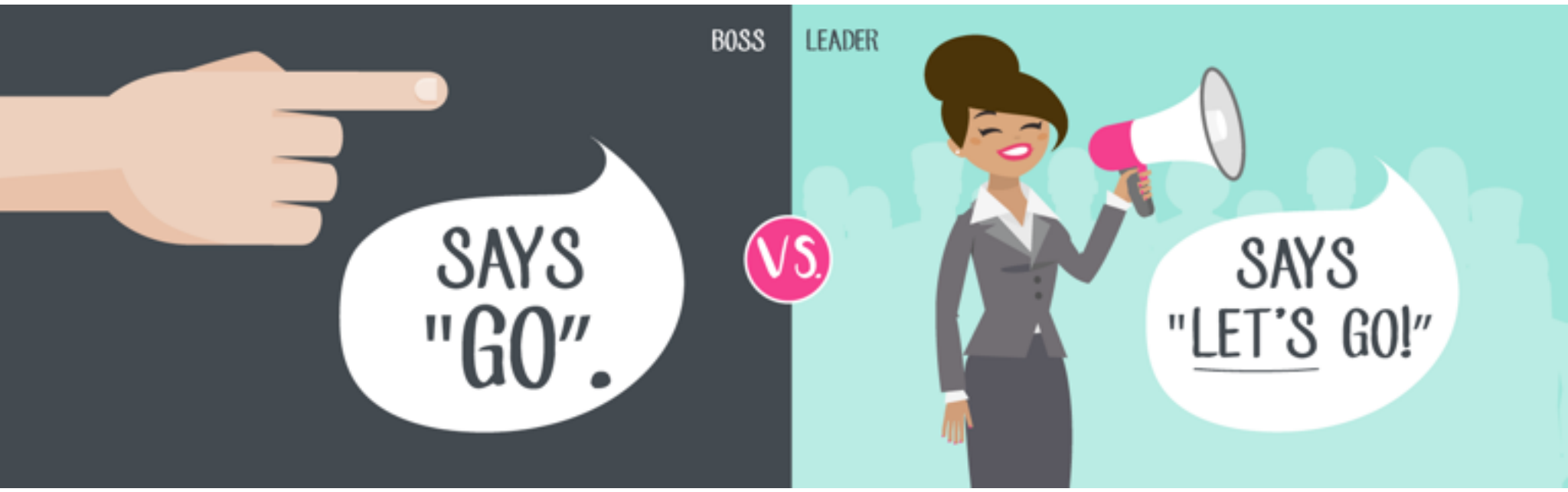
5. Leaders Don't Use People, They Develop Them

This one seems subtle, but what this one is all about is how people perceive those that work under them. The last point about respect is directly related to this one. If you don't respect your employees, you'll use them, and look at them as machines that work for you.

True leaders will look at their employees as humans, with potential to grow and get better. Understanding this, leaders will work to develop people into future leaders, which in turn will make them look better.

Bosses don’t have time to be bothered with concerns from their employees, whereas leaders will make time to meet with their employees frequently and give them constructive feedback to help them get better. Leaders will take the time to get to know their employees and help them as much as they possibly can.

6. Leaders Say Let’s Go



Leaders understand that they are as much a part of the team as the employee that works under them. If you have the attitude that employees work for you, and you don’t have anything to do, they’ll take care of everything, then you can call yourself a boss.

If on the other hand, you’re ready to roll up your sleeves and get to work alongside your employees, then you can consider yourself a leader.

It’s all about leading by example. If you ask employees to work extra hard to meet a client deadline and you’re out on the golf course, you shouldn’t expect your employees to be happy.

7. Leaders Take Blame And Give Credit

This is mostly a question of confidence and ego. Leaders don't care to get credit, even if they did most of the work. They're happy to give it up to the employees to make them feel proud and more engaged.

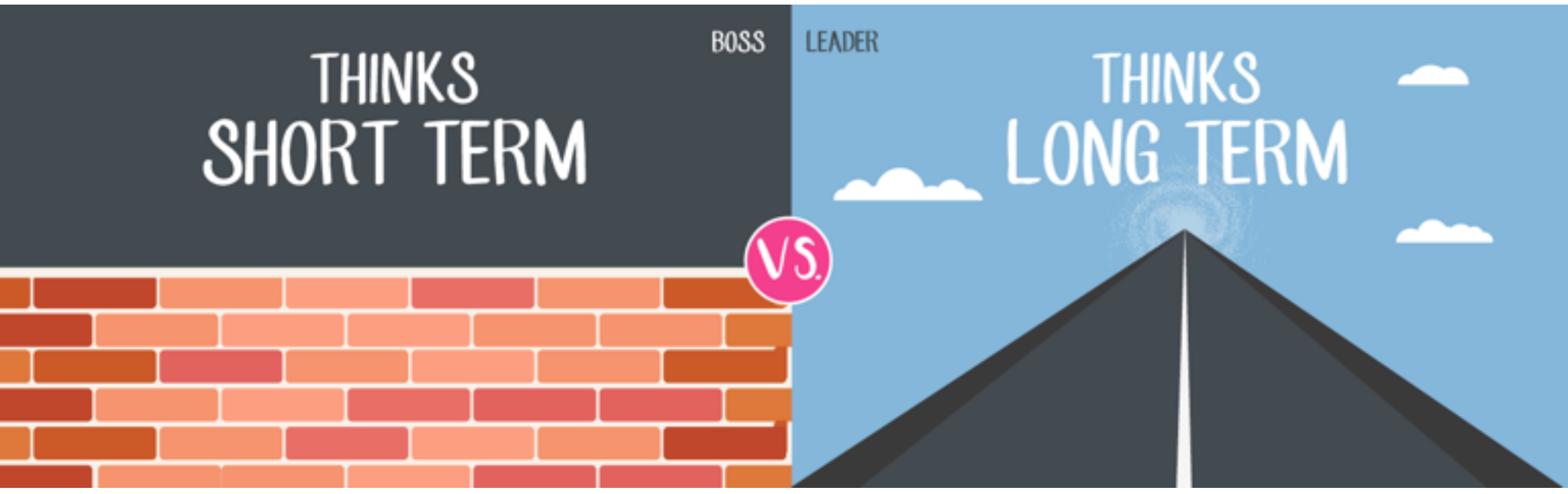
The best leaders are also happy to take the blame, even if it wasn't their fault. Again, in order to not disengage employees, they'll be willing to take the blame if something goes wrong. This is a very noble act when you think about it. Bosses need that credit to feed their ego. Not only are bosses not willing to take blame, but they're looking to see where they can assign blame, instead of moving on and trying to fix the issue and ensuring it doesn't happen again.

8. Leaders Think Long Term

A lot of this has to do with your core values and mission of the company. I've worked for many companies where there was no clearly defined mission, and we were all just working to make money.

When you have a values-based company, you can be smart with how you make decisions. If it doesn't satisfy your long term vision, then it doesn't get done. Everything is thought out long term, and everyone in the company is on the same page.

On the other hand, most bosses are too focused on the next sale or next quarter's results so they make short term decisions, that end up costing a lot (time and energy) down the road.



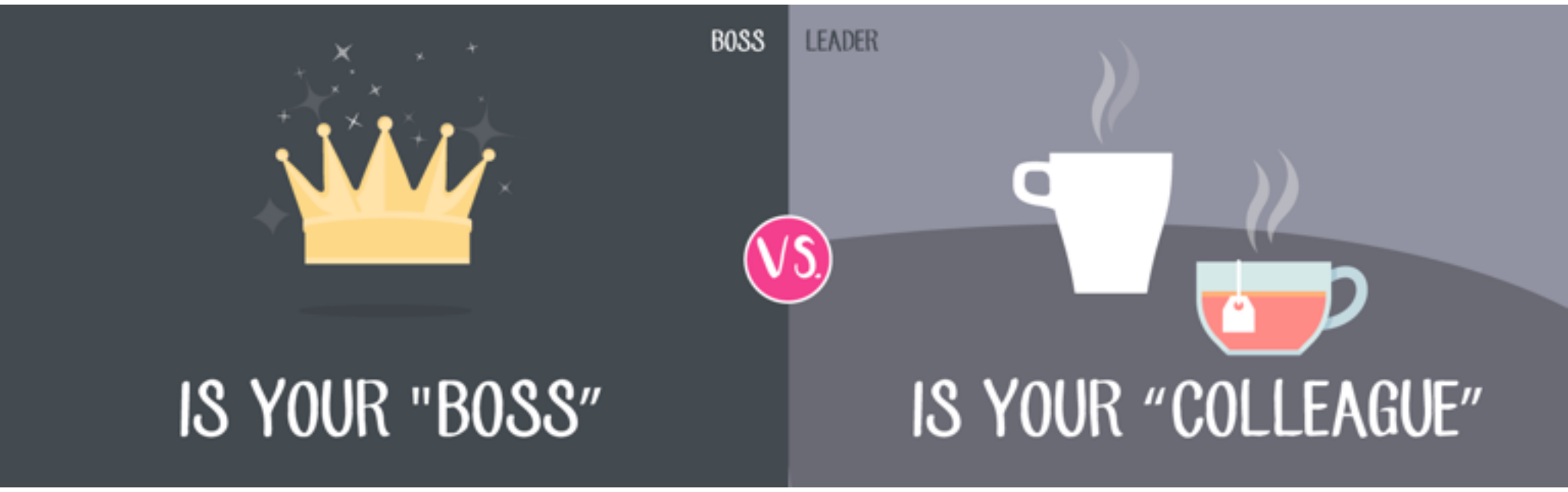
9. Leaders Are Your Colleagues

What leaders should want to do is create a culture where everyone is the same. Flat hierarchies are becoming more popular because it removes the notion that someone is above you and better than you. Everyone has something to offer, and everyone deserves to be treated the same.

My favorite example of this is Tony Hsieh, the CEO of Zappos. He could have the fanciest corner office, but he famously chooses to sit at the same size desk

as his call center employees, and he sits right out there in the call center with everyone else.

Bosses, again likely to feed their ego, need to feel important and act like they are above you. Power corrupts, we've seen that many times throughout history, but smart leaders know that treating everyone as equals is a smart move.



10. Leaders Are Focused On People

Your people are your best asset.

I wish more bosses would believe that, and treat their employees how they deserve to be treated. Bosses are often way too focused on processes, and don't let their employees take risks and try new things.

Your employees have smart ideas, and they're eager to share them if you give them a chance. Using an employee engagement platform, leaders can get insight into how their employees feel about them on a regular basis.

Does Management Know The Difference Between A Boss And A Leader?

Get feedback from employees using an employee engagement survey software to find out the pulse of your office. You can get constant feedback about how employees feel about the leaders in their organization by checking out Officevibe, for weekly reports on your company.

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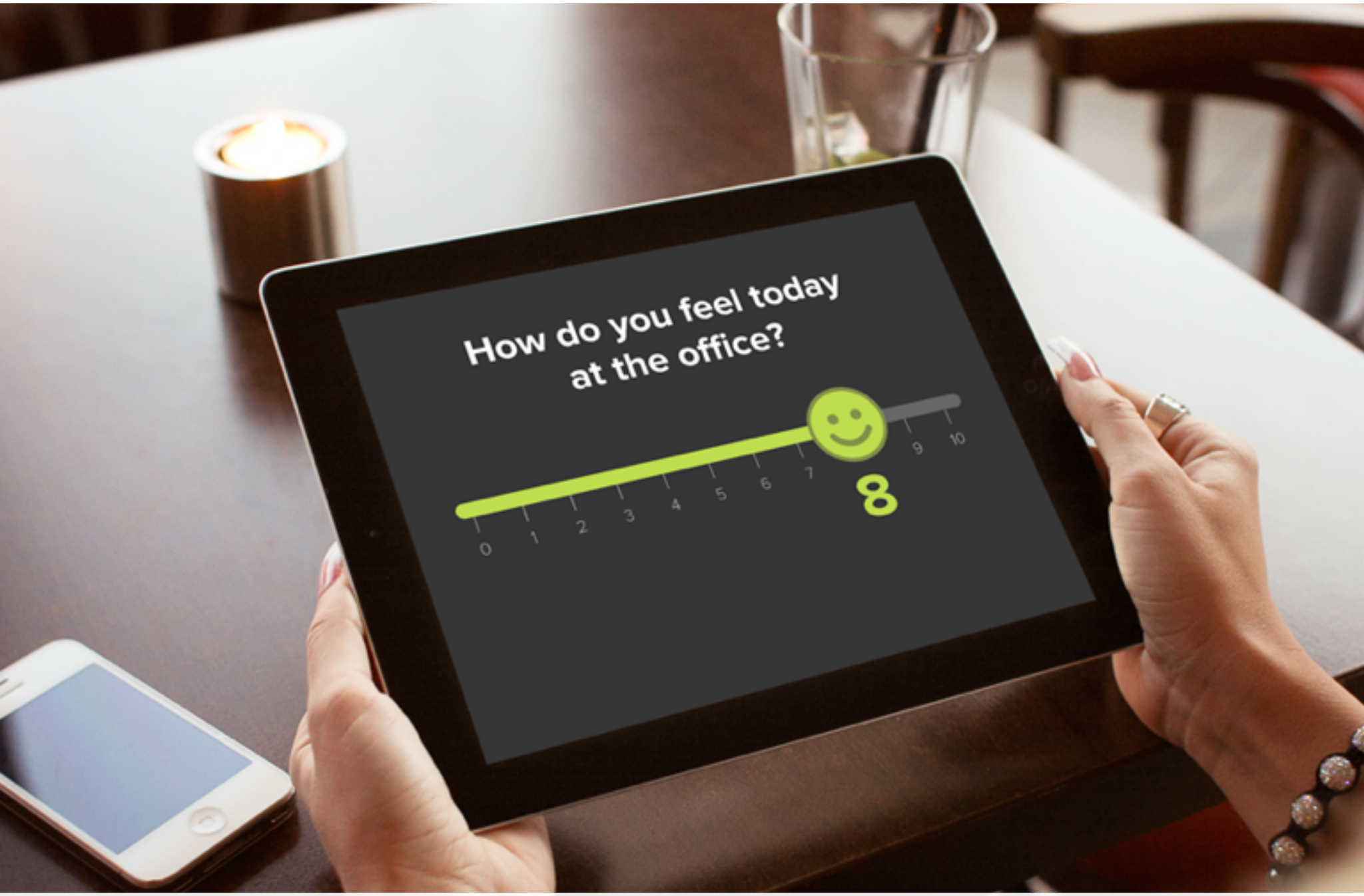
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