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Bosses Don't Have to Be Bossy

By Ted Landphair
Washington, DC
24 September 2007

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Grumpy and grouchy executive models are out. Friendliness, relaxation, a little "quality time" and a laugh or two with one's staff get results these days

Picture the big boss. He's a distinguished older man, traditionally, though a few women have broken the mold. He got to the top by being smarter, more ambitious, maybe more ruthless than his colleagues and competitors. He was an Ebenezer Scrooge, the cold-hearted taskmaster in Charles Dickens's classic story, "A Christmas Carol." Or a Donald Trump, the New York real estate tycoon who writes a lot about getting rich and whose television program was all about

firing people.

But as the 21st century unfolds, the tyrant model of the corporate executive may be changing. In a new book called Smarter, Faster, Better, Karlin Sloan, a well-known executive coach and business-school lecturer, shatters a lot of assumptions about success.



Karlin Sloan runs a company that provides executive coaching. And she is an adjunct professor at the Wharton School of business in Philadelphia

Traditionally, she writes, the big boss got where he is by outsmarting subordinates and competitors. But in the Internet age, information is everywhere. A lot of people are smart. Top executives don't need to be perfectionists or even experts. They can ask their colleagues for answers.



Karlin Sloan says today's most effective big shots exercise, eat healthy food, even take energy-building naps, and try to make big decisions when they're fresh.

OK, so there are better places to catch a few winks. But Karlin Sloan says a daily, stress-reducing nap is a good idea for busy top managers

In short, they take a holistic approach to work, perfecting what Sloan calls a relaxed, "Theta

state" of mind. She even touts what she calls "mini-meditations," in which the big boss sets an egg timer and drifts into five minutes of creative contemplation.



This guy's a big shot, all right, but flaunting one's position won't get your company sales orders in the 21st century. Teamwork and smarts matter more than image

It's awfully hard to imagine Ebenezer Scrooge or Donald Trump zoning out of the ratrace for even five seconds. "Bah, humbug," Scrooge would say. But then, could that miserly old despot run a multifaceted, global corporation in the 21st century?

Smarter, Faster, Better, by Karlin Sloan, is published by Jossey-Bass of San Francisco.

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