



# You Can Lead a Horse to Water

## Strategies to Keep Moving Forward When Others Don't Follow the Rules

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OSBA leads the way to educational excellence by serving Ohio's public school board members and the diverse districts they represent through superior service, unwavering advocacy and creative solutions.



# You can lead a horse to water...



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Hint: This is Cheryl's session disclaimer!



**ONE** of these groups is enjoying the ride...



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## Rule Breakers Among Us



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# The Micro Manager

## Five Ingredients

1. Power Position
2. Self-Doubt
3. Inability to Trust
4. Perfectionistic Tendency
5. Unrealistic Expectations

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# The “Innocent” Micro Manager

1. Unaware of the role
2. Detail person
3. Highly organized
4. Thinks in “bites”
5. Highly invested

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## The Micro Manager

- Over-scrutinizes
  - Requires much more time (or more data) than many to weigh information or come to decision
  - Asks many more questions than seems reasonable or appropriate

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## The Micro Manager

- Demands excessive oversight
  - Wants or needs more status updates or progress meetings than should be necessary
  - Disrupts the chain of command to assure self that works is moving forward appropriately

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## The Micro Manager

- Isn't as concerned with the "what" as the "how"
  - Spends majority of time concerned with action steps and process instead of end result
  - Confuses role as governor with that of manager

### The Micromanager



"You're stapling that weird. Here, let me show you how to staple."

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## The Bully



### Four Main Types

1. Shock and Awe!
2. Passive Aggressive
3. Gate-Keeper
4. Constant Critic

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## 2. Passive Aggressive

- Rumor Spreader but “never the source”
- Two-faced tiger who wants to be everyone’s confidant/friend
- Seeks to control or manipulate others’ reputations
- Unwilling to state intentions clearly

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## 1. Shock and Awe!

- Surprise Attacks
- Scream tactics
- Always in public
- Key strategy of Shock and Awe bullies is to paralyze, unnerve and freeze others from responding.



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### 3. Gate Keeper

- Wants to be the only one with all of the details
- Enjoys ability to see work grind to a halt
- Wants to control deadlines
- Withholds information until last possible moment

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### 4. Constant Critic

- Prefers discussions behind closed doors
- Becomes your word against theirs
- Often targets the previously most liked or most trusted
- Key strategy of Constant Critic is to redefine competent people as incompetent

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## What makes a Rule Breaker?

- Is this person new to the board or the district?
  - Less trust
  - More oversight
  - Wants to make immediate impact
  - Looking for his or her place

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## What makes a Rule Breaker?

- Is this person psychologically programmed to control?
  - Childhood/background
  - Other aspects of life out of control
  - Low self-esteem
  - Is him/herself controlled by others

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## What makes a Rule Breaker?

- Innocent Ignorance
  - Doesn't know they're behaving or acting inappropriately
  - Doesn't understand his or her appropriate role
  - Unfamiliar with the governance role (the 'what not the how')

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## Keep in Mind...

Micro managers, bullies and difficult people tend to have a central “go to” personality or style, but may jump across types when the need arises.

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## Keep in Mind...

Even harder...a Rule Breaker can be a micro manager **and** a bully **and** a difficult person!

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## Use Positive Strategies and...

1. Adjust! You most likely cannot “fix” the person.
2. Seek understanding. What is driving this person’s dysfunctional behavior? Knowledge? Control? Security? Status?

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## Five Positive Strategies for Moving Forward When the Rule Breakers are Making it Tough



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## Strategy #1

### Be assertive, not aggressive

- Use very clear communication.
- Don't say more than you need to make your point. "I'm not prepared right now to support that idea."
- State the fact and then your feelings. "When you don't fully prepare for our meetings, I feel disrespected."

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## Strategy #2

### Make up-front agreements

- Consider a process agreement/review
- Agree on gate-checks, status updates to ensure accountability of all
- Don't allow for back-sliding. "We all agreed on our goal and the process."
- "What specifically is happening that is making you question this decision?"

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## Strategy #3

- Make it about their success
  - "We know you want to make a great decision. What can I/we do to build your trust in the staff's ability to do the work?"
  - "Your collaboration will make our discussion better. What information do you need to participate in the work?"
  - "At this point there's no right or wrong answer. We're exploring all alternatives."

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## Strategy #4

### Recognize It's Not About You

- Address inappropriate behavior in a neutral place whenever possible. “Let’s take some time to think about what’s happened and come back to it tomorrow.”
- “Your reaction has taken me by surprise. I need some time to think about my response.”
- Build the relationship and the trust in order to make honest feedback easier

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## Strategy #4

### Recognize It's Not About You

- Understand that fighting makes it worse, and in fact may be what the rule breaker is looking for.
- “I sense your frustration. What can we provide to make it less stressful to have this conversation?”
- “You disagree with this idea. Tell us more about why.”

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**THERE ARE SOME PEOPLE  
WHO ALWAYS SEEM ANGRY  
AND CONTINUOUSLY  
LOOK FOR CONFLICT.  
WALK AWAY;  
THE BATTLE THEY ARE  
FIGHTING ISN'T WITH YOU,  
IT IS WITH THEMSELVES.**



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## Strategy #5

- Keep the focus where it should be: On Governance -- the “what”, not the “how”
  - An exception might be when newbies are in training or orientation mode
  - Use your district’s goals, vision or strategic plan as a measuring stick for the “what”.
  - Look for middle ground. “We don’t all agree on this idea. Let’s build on the points where we all do agree.”
  - “Let’s remember what our end-goal is. We have staff in place to get us there.”



## Bonus Thoughts!

- Be very clear in board meeting conversations.
- Use board meetings to educate your community.
- Put the basic BOE responsibilities on your web page
- Respect and use the Chain of Command

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## Remember my disclaimer?

- It's not our job to fix the rule breakers, but to find the 'work arounds'.
- Attempt to understand why they're doing what they're doing.
- Be consistent in addressing the issue, not the personality.

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Work hard to believe that even the worst Rule Breaker can sometimes have a good perspective or great idea.



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Thanks for being with me today!

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