

How to Deal with a Bad Boss

It has often been said that people don't leave bad jobs; they leave bad managers. That's because a bad boss can turn even the most pleasant working environment into a miserable, soul sucking workplace.

The effects that bad bosses have on an organization are many. They drive away talent, cause workplace misery, decrease employee performance, and are a leading cause of workplace absenteeism.

According to the Canadian Mental Health Association, about 20% of the payroll of a typical company goes towards dealing with stress-related problems such as absenteeism, employee turnover, and counselling.

Dealing with a bad boss is one of the most stressful factors in the work environment today. In fact, studies indicate that nearly 20 percent of workplace stress is a result from poor interpersonal relationships.

If you've ever had to deal with a bad boss, you know that, like it or not, your boss has the power. After all, bosses are the ones who have the ability to assign tasks, influence a performance appraisal, and terminate your position.

Despite a power imbalance, no one needs to accept a bad boss. However, in order to navigate your way through a difficult relationship, it is important to always act in a professional manner, develop a backup plan and document critical events as they unfold.

Here are some ways to achieve this:

- **Act in a professional manner**

Keep your professional ace on and keep your cool, no matter how emotional the conversation gets. This will keep you out of an ego driven argument. Blowing up or acting out won't help you reach a solution. Rather, it will make you look as though you are challenging your manager's authority. You don't have to treat your boss as a friend, but as he or she is in the more powerful position it is important that you act with professionalism and integrity. Chances are, your behaviour will be documented by your supervisor and put in your personnel file.

- **Equip yourself with a backup plan**

Before dealing with any conflict, create a backup plan that you can fall back on if you don't achieve a desired resolution. Choices give power. Having an alternative plan will give you the freedom to walk away should walking away be the only acceptable outcome.

- **Document, document, document**

Nothing more critical than keeping a detailed record of problematic interactions. Keeping track of what happened, when it happened, and why it happened could be the difference between keeping your job and being fired. Additionally, document your own activities that highlight your accomplishments in a tangible and statistical manner. Keeping track of your job performance and interpersonal relationships will give you greater negotiating power during those difficult times.

Work relationships are no different than other relationships. They work best when both people are flexible, accept differences, and work towards a common goal. Positive working relationships are not the sole responsibility of the person in charge. However, when dealing with a difficult boss, you may have to give a little more to achieve the workplace environment you desire.

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