

My boss is a bully! Managing mean managers

Written by Julie Desmond
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(Disclaimer to my current boss, who reads this newspaper, this isn't about you.)

37% of all workers have been bullied on the job. According to one survey, bad bosses come in every shape and color. Most bullies are male; however, among female bad bosses, 71% choose victims who are also female. What makes a bad boss? And what can be done to stop him or her?

Unfortunately, a bad boss cannot always be redeemed. Often, it's the boss who stays, and everyone else has to leave. Employees caught in a bad boss conundrum would be wise to see it for the minor irritation it usually is, and work around it until the situation changes.

In support of managers, keeping everyone happy is a tough challenge. Managers have a responsibility to keep employees comfortable physically and intellectually. Is the desk an appropriate size? Is the production environment safe? Does everyone have the tools, equipment and training they need to succeed? These are fundamental facets of a productive workplace. But not every manager ranks creature comfort high on the necessities wish list.

A bad boss disregards or ignores employees' needs. Not every worker needs a private office with a personal refrigerator but workspaces should be adjustable to suit each person's unique size and preference. Occasionally adapting a workspace is a small cost relative to the price of a lawsuit or workers compensation ding that occurs when an employee requires carpal tunnel surgery or sues for harassment.

If your bad boss repeatedly ignores reasonable requests for items required to do your job, make your requests through email. Save a hard copy trail as well as the electronic copies as documentation in case you need to take your situation to HR.

A bad boss makes promises... and breaks them. Bully bosses mess with your professional equilibrium by constantly changing goals and expectations, as well as meeting times and locations.

One boss I know of required a meeting with each subordinate. Although he mandated the meetings, he frequently arrived late or not at all. The employees felt this was unfair on multiple levels. They wanted the discussion time, meant to address progress toward objectives, and

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they felt if they cancelled or showed up late, they would be held accountable.

These employees approached the boss together. They avoided complaining, but instead emphasized the value of the conversations. They were able to improve results without alienating any one employee or manager.

Bad bosses gossip. Workers who listen quietly and don't engage, will be able to diffuse the problem. I worked awhile for a Gossip Boss. If one person got an earful, the rest of the team would eagerly wait to be filled in. What was it this time? Oh, she doesn't like your shoes. Next day, someone else was the target, someone else the receiver. Because no one respected her, no one was particularly moved by her catty opinions.

Bad bosses cheat. Bad bosses yell. Bad bosses play favorites. They cover for favorite employees, excusing missed deadlines or botched projects.

If you are currently working under the dubious supervision of a bad boss, the best you can probably do is to do your best work every day, document every transgression and immediately start looking for something new.

Julie Desmond is Contract Specialist with Specialized Recruiting Group. Write to julie@insightnews.com