

(Plan Your Career) Bully Bosses: Is your leadership style an obstacle to success?

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One of my best bosses was also the worst. Glynn tackled every problem with a right hook. She knew how to argue, and looked for opportunities to practice. The consummate bully, if she disliked someone's attitude, she complained about it to others. If someone's results were poor, she called them out in front of everyone, often shouting and, no kidding, stamping her feet. Glynn taught us all we needed to know about how not to lead an organization. Most people have encountered a manager like Glynn. But what if you discover that the workplace bully is... you?

Some managers learn through a review that others are complaining. Or you might notice that people recoil when you enter a room. Instinctively you go on the defensive, blame others, or write it off as "their problem," not yours. If a tough, honest assessment reveals that you are contributing to the problem, you'd be smart to use this self-awareness to your advantage. According to Charles Darwin, it is not the strongest of the species that survives, nor the most intelligent, but rather the most responsive to change.

You know you're a bully at work if you: lead through intimidation, expecting results because you demand them; you have to do everything yourself or you redo others' work because only you can get it right; you prefer to make decisions on your own, without gathering ideas from co-workers; you seek out others when they screw up, but know little about them personally.

In their book, *Grown Up Leadership*, Leigh and Maureen Bailey suggest managers can achieve better results by stepping up their interpersonal skills. They recommend that leaders get to know people personally, asking about their families or interests. Learn what motivates them, so you can persuade them toward the results you need.

Versatility is an underrated management tool. Tiger Woods is not golfing with the same clubs he had at age ten because times and technology change. Intimidating managers can miss out on the innovation and ingenuity of colleagues. Try planning ahead to speak less and listen more in meetings and conversations. This is not easy. Taking notes can help you focus on what others are saying, rather than interjecting your own opinion. You might be surprised at what the idiots around you bring to the table. You might also be disappointed. But at least you know what options might be open to you.

Self-awareness is the best means of moving ahead in your career. Own your own behavior, and change it when you need to and your team will begin to respond more effectively to your leadership.

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