

SECTION 3.1

Activity 2

SCRIPT:

What to Do When You Have a Bad Boss

In order to thrive under a bad boss you will need to come to work ready to play your best game every day. Remember, this will serve your career, so don't resent it, relish it!

1. Be Organized

Let your boss's disorganization be an inspiration for you to be your most organized. This is the foundation on which to build your whole career. This will allow you to deliver on all the other steps that follow. Have a system for managing your time, tasks, and projects. The more organized you are, the more productive you will be and the faster you will reach your career goals.

2. Deliver Results in Writing

This is important for pretty much all boss types. If you've notified your boss in writing, particularly via email, you have an e-trail to prove you finished assigned tasks on time.

3. Write Your Own Quarterly Reviews

Make it easy for your boss to write a good quarterly review of you. Have one place where you file all your accomplishments for the quarter, such as an email folder or Word document. Nothing is too small to log. When it comes time for quarterly reviews you can then easily type up your self-assessment with a list of your accomplishments. Be proactive and use the format that your boss prefers. Your boss can then use that for writing your review.

4. Present Your Daily/Weekly Plan to Your Boss in Writing

This is helpful for bosses who demand more than you can physically deliver. When you plan your day and your week, send a quick listing of how you will be spending your time. Be sure to prioritize it according to what your boss thinks is most important. When your boss gives you more assignments than you can handle, you

can go to your boss with your daily/weekly plan that you already sent to him/her and ask your boss which items they want you to let slide.

Always put that decision back on your boss (and confirm it in a quick email for that e-trail,) so that they can't yell at you for letting something slide. If they say "put in more hours," then you need to decide for yourself how many hours per week is acceptable. If you are continually asked to work beyond what is acceptable to you, then you may want to move onto Step #9 Unbearable Situations.

5. Make Your Boss Look Good

Resist the urge for sabotage because it rarely works and often backfires in your face. When you are working to make your boss look good, even bad bosses are going to notice this. When you make your boss look good, their boss will hopefully notice. But don't wait for your boss to give you credit. Claim the credit, toot your horn. I saw too many good workers get buried under feelings of self-pity because they weren't getting noticed. You must speak up and let your boss, your boss's boss, and your peers know about your accomplishments.

YOU are in charge of getting yourself ahead in your career. Of course you should do this in a humble manner and give plenty of praise for your boss and anyone else who aided you. When your boss looks good, you look good, as long as you speak up. If your boss aggressively campaigns to make you look bad or steal 100% credit, and this is a pattern, then you may have an Unbearable Situation. If so, skip ahead to #9.

6. Don't Argue But Do Stand Your Ground

If your boss attacks you, remain calm. Do not take the bait. This takes a zen-like state of mind, but it can be done. I know because I've had to do it. Control your emotions for the moment. Imagine that you have a force field around you which cannot be penetrated by verbal attack. I know this may sound kooky, but it will help your mental strength.

How should you respond? Matter-of-factly. Answer the "charges" with the facts and your understanding of what was expected of you. Explain that you did not know of the new expectations, but that you now understand how your boss wants things done going forward. Remain confident, strong, non-aggressive, and business-like. Ask if there is anything else and then go back to work. At the next opportunity, take a break outside to phone a friend and let off steam. Try not to do that at work. The risk is too great that your boss will overhear.

If the attacks are beyond what you think are acceptable, such as derogatory name calling or simply your own decision that the potential rewards are not worth working with such a difficult person, then move onto Step #9.

7. Manage Your Boss

This is all about being proactive. Don't wait for your boss to give you his or her expectations of you. Request a meeting to set these goals. If such meeting is continually postponed by your boss then put together your best estimate of what you think your goals should be. Put them in writing and ask for your boss to give his or her feedback.

Always be thinking two steps ahead of your boss. Try to anticipate what your boss will want in any given situation. If you're sure then deliver it before your boss can even ask you. For things you're not sure about, ask, and if you are right then go ahead and deliver on that. For example, your company just came out with a new promotion for clients. You know that your boss likes functions to launch promotions. Go ahead and ask your boss if he/she would like you to spearhead putting together a function.

Make things easy for your boss and hopefully they will make some things easy for you. If your boss does not help you in any way, then consider moving on to Step #9.

8. Ask For What You Want

Make sure you always know where it is you want to go with your career. Don't expect to just be "promoted" for good work. Because the question is "promoted to where?" You must know first where you want to go next. Then you must communicate this to your boss. You must do it often, kind of like your own marketing campaign with your boss as your target audience. If possible you should find a way to let your boss's boss know too, without being seen as "going over your boss's head."

You should put it in writing with a step by step plan of how you intend to get there, listing skills you plan to develop and how, and accomplishments you will seek to achieve and by when. Ask for feedback on your plan. And as always remember to summarize your meeting in a follow up email to your boss after the meeting. If your boss doesn't reply, send 1 additional polite reminder saying that you want to make sure that you are on the same page.

As you reach milestones along your path, document this with an email to your boss and file a copy in your “accomplishments” email folder. Promotions are not always completely within your boss’s sole control, so be somewhat understanding of this, but only to a degree. If you feel that you are not making progress on your larger career goals, then you may want to move on. See the next step.

9. Unbearable Situations

If you have exhausted all possible tactics and your boss is just too abusive, clueless or otherwise unacceptable and you feel it is hurting your career or slowing you down, you may want to consider moving on from this boss. How should you go about doing this? With the utmost professionalism. Never give in to the desire to tell off your boss because you have decided to leave. Your paths may cross again.

If you like the company, but can’t bear working for your current boss, you may want to do some research into a lateral move to a different manager. Depending on the situation you may need to use discretion when researching this at first or if you feel comfortable that your boss would be open to you moving on then be up front with them about it. Use whatever polite reason you want to state to your boss, and don’t be tempted into confiding in a new boss how bad your old boss was. Leave that for your friends and family. Always be professional at work and take the high ground. At work, stay focused on the future and moving forward.

If you don’t see a future with your current company, then you will want to embark on a job search. Obviously be discreet. And keep to the golden rule of job switching, “Don’t leave your current job until you have a new one lined up.” And you will want to have that in writing too. I’ve seen friends receive verbal offers of a job only to receive a callback saying “sorry we just had a hiring freeze implemented, we can’t take you on.” And when you do leave, make sure to do so on a positive note. Never burn any bridges, no matter how rickety they are.

Conclusion

Hopefully by the end of this post you may view your situation with your difficult boss from a whole new perspective. Perhaps you will see that there is a silver lining in having a “bad boss” as it forces you to up your career game, putting you ahead of the competition.