

### “BOSSES FROM HELL”



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Internet stories abound about people’s experiences with a “boss from hell.” Books have been written about them and late night talk show hosts joke about them. But having a boss from hell isn’t funny. And having a boss from hell on the management team is dangerous for the company as well: high turnover, low productivity, and poor morale are signals that the boss is creating and perpetuating these high-cost problems.

Here are some behaviors of bosses from hell. Hopefully, they might see themselves here and decide to get some professional assistance to deal with their anger, fear and hostility toward others, which would be of benefit to themselves, their co-workers, and of course, the business.

- 1) They verbally abuse people and treat them as if they are expendable commodities, showing no tolerance or respect for them, assuming that their position entitles and protects them to treat others this way.
- 2) They take credit for the ideas or work of others. Remember the movie “Working Girl”? Unfortunately, the film was an example of art imitating life. When the boss was temporarily disabled, the subordinate, while attempting to fill in, discovered that an innovative idea that she suggested to her boss had been implemented by the boss, who had promoted it as her own idea.
- 3) When someone attempts to give legitimate feedback that the boss does not want to hear, they minimize or dismiss the issue by implying the person is a whiner or complainer.
- 4) They twist the truth or downright lie to protect themselves and their interests. Bosses from hell will swear that they never said a particular thing, or made a particular promise, when in fact they had. It becomes the employee’s word against the boss’s.
- 5) They are bullies, embarrassing employees by admonishing them in public hallways or in meetings. This also serves to intimidate and warn others, sending the message not to dare challenge, make a mistake, or otherwise be contrary to the boss.
- 6) They push people to their limits by forcing unreasonable performance expectations or goals. If they want to fire an employee who threatens them in some way, they may use this tactic to set the person up for failure, creating a “legitimate” business reason for eventually letting the person go.
- 7) They belittle other people’s ideas or accomplishments. To diminish the contributions of others only serves to increase their own self-importance. Those around them, however, are quick to observe the truth.
- 8) They coerce people to work unreasonably long hours or frequent overtime, implying that they are not a “team player” or that their job could be at risk if they don’t comply. This can create incredible stress for good employees who are put in the position of choosing between spending time with family or being in disfavor with the boss.

People will only tolerate a boss from hell for so long before their personal dignity and need for self-respect can no longer tolerate it. When they finally choose not to stay in a toxic environment, they will move, get transfers, or find a job elsewhere to get away from the tyranny of this person. Bosses from hell have been the inspiration of many to leave their former companies to start their own – sometimes competing – businesses, where they can create a culture built on their values of dignity, respect, and appreciation of others.