

TIPS FOR DEALING WITH A DIFFICULT BOSS

How to Communicate with Mars when You're on Venus

If you've held a few jobs, there's a good chance you've dealt with a difficult boss. How should an employee deal with a difficult boss? How do you best communicate with someone who likes chocolate when you like vanilla?

If you read the studies, the # 1 reason for dis-satisfied employees and low morale is bad bosses. Typically, people don't leave bad jobs, they leave bad bosses. Because every situation is different and calls for a different way of handling problems, there is no blanket "how to handle a bad boss" statement. But here are some general communication tips:

1. Don't Get Personal. Take the emotion out of your voice and presence when you approach your boss. When you are ready and can be calm, even if he or she is the jerk of the year, schedule a formal meeting and tell them that you would like to talk about ways to work together more effectively and productively. Approach your boss as if he/she was a child. If you become emotional, the child will continue to test you. But if you are focused, straightforward and come across as meaning what you say, the child will be more likely to back off and obey.
2. Before speaking to your boss, create an action plan. Develop two to three key points that bother you about your boss---not their personality—remember, take the emotion out of this, but two or three points that impact, affect or prevent you from doing your job. Then come up with alternatives or solutions to that behavior and explain how communicating it differently will make you more productive and efficient.
3. If this doesn't work and your boss is totally unreceptive, then go to your HR department, but make sure you write down the problems and issues and back them up with examples to help the HR person understand. For example, instead of saying, "My boss yells at me and it's inappropriate."--think about what is inappropriate and offensive. For example, as a reporter at ABC TV in Philadelphia, we had a night time assignment editor who cursed and insulted. He would scream obscenities at the top of his lungs in the newsroom. The screaming didn't get him in trouble, but the use of foul language did.

Remember, it's important to act professionally at all times. Unfortunately, the nature of the workplace is to gossip and vent especially when the boss is terrible or offensive. But be careful not to spread rumors or talk behind people's backs. That can come back to haunt you and make you look like part of the problem, instead of being part of the solution.