

# Dealing With A Bad Boss

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Everyone has horror stories about the "Bad Boss" they worked for. We know, because we have worked for a number of them. Unfortunately, the "Bad Boss" is much more common than many of us would want to believe. Having common horror stories to tell is not much consolation when you spend every day dreading going to work. A bad boss drains the workplace of energy. And here is the really bad news: the bad boss is not going away. The good news? There is a way to deal with them.

What is the definition of a "Bad Boss"?

While we each may have our own favorite description (or horror story!) there are certain things that "Bad Bosses" have in common:

1. They don't need facts. Their minds are already made up.
2. No one, certainly no one on their staff, is as smart as they are.
3. They never saw a good idea that they were not willing to take credit for.
4. Their voices tend to have two volume settings: LOUD and "Hold your ears"
5. When something goes wrong, they are quick to find someone to blame.

We could go on, but you get the point. Sadly, bad bosses are not rare. In fact, in many organizations they are the norm, not the exception. And bad bosses are in some ways like vampires. When they look into the mirror, they don't see their own reflection. We have yet to meet a bad boss who understands how poor they are, and are looking to improve themselves. Instead, they gaze into the mirror and see a false reflection of the superior boss they believe themselves to be.

How do you deal with a bad boss?

There are a couple of obvious tactics:

1. Quit your job and go work somewhere else. This is the most straightforward answer, but it's not always practical
2. Complain to HR. This is the most politically correct answer, and the one your HR rep will give you, but bad bosses have a way of being vindictive and this could make your life worse, not better.
3. Have a face to face sit down with him/her. We personally like this possibility much better than option 2, but the thought of confronting the boss is enough to scare many people away. And again, you may end up with more retaliation than change.
4. Ignore them and just deal with it. People will tell you to get a thicker skin and not let the boss bother you. This is good advice, especially when you give it to someone else.

5. Resort to violence. A tempting but highly impractical answer. Violence won't help. In fact, you'll probably end up sharing a jail cell with a person just like your boss.

While it's unlikely that you will be able to change your boss, what you can do is change your attitude toward them. Smart employees will not let a bad boss drag them down to their level. Instead, they learn the boss's hot buttons, know their boss's flash points, and know what their boss is looking for. And they find ways to present things to their boss in a way that he/she will truly understand.

Now, I'm not talking here about being a suck-up, or not telling your boss the truth, but I am talking about communicating with them in a way they will understand. And the key to that communication is in understanding the heart of the issues for the boss.

There are two sides to any communication: what I send, and what the other person receives. Just as you have your own preferred communication style, so does everyone else, including your boss. When you communicate with people in accordance with their preferences, the message is received more clearly and the relationship can be built faster and stronger.

One great way to understand your preferred method of communication, and that of others, is through a tool called DISC. DISC is a behavioral profile that helps us understand ourselves and others. Once you understand yourself and your bad boss, you can begin to make the adjustments necessary to communicate with them more clearly. While this alone won't change the boss (unless they also take a DISC profile and begin to adapt to you) it will ease your pain and make going to work that much more pleasant and productive.

At ECI Learning Systems, we regularly use DISC to help employees and leaders learn to appreciate and value each other's strengths and to communicate more effectively. While "bad bosses" aren't going away, using DISC can certainly help you learn to deal with them.

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An engaged and energized workforce leads to higher productivity, reduced costs, improved customer service, and increased profitability. Employee engagement happens when your Corporate Culture, Leadership Style, and Employee Expectations are in synch.

The Fusion Program from ECI Learning Systems is designed to align these 3 concepts in your organization – engaging your employees and creating positive energy that will propel your company to new heights.

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