

What to do If You Work for a **Bad Boss.**

By Charles H. Bishop Jr. Ph.D.

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Economists say that today's downsizing trend and Climate of job uncertainty are merely a return to Economic reality. If true, then employees need to wake Up and take a hard look at their own job security. Outplacement experts agree that high performers are more likely to survive layoffs. But what do you do if your exemplary performance is being undermined by a bad system or a bad boss?

THE "ROTTEN EGG" SYNDROME

Unfortunately, one rotten egg in your department really can spoil the whole batch if that person is your boss. Once you are aware of this problem, it is imperative that you take action. After all, both the quality and security of your job may be at stake.

Bad bosses are lethal. Under a bad boss, your confidence and self-esteem can be eroded. Interestingly, it is the better performers who lose more under a bad boss or a bad performance system.

You will need to initiate a change strategy that will get your boss, your coworkers, and you moving in a fresh and more promising direction.

Three key points to remember before you get started in earnest:

1. Poor bosses are not likely to change unless they have a fire built under them; miraculous conversions rarely happen.
2. Poor boss's work attitude is not always possible, some bosses are just mean, unconscious, ill-intentioned, and out of touch with how their own behavior impacts others.

FIVE STEPS TO SUCCESS IN A BAD PERFORMANCE SYSTEM

If your talents and efforts are getting dragged down by a terrible boss, you will either have to excel on your own or throw your boss a life preserver. Either way means designing and then implementing a strategy that will ultimately affect your job.

Because organizations are flatter than they have ever been, individuals must work across functions and departments to accomplish results. If you are good, you will get a great deal of exposure. In other words, your boss is not the only person who will become aware of your talents and capabilities. One aspect of business that has not changed is the currency of talent. Talent is still valued as much as it ever was. You will be noticed by the people who matter.

If, in your present situation, your own efforts or your department's performance are being overwhelmed by your boss's ineptitude, here are five steps to resolving the situation successfully.

1. Face outside first. To achieve buy-in for your agenda from your boss and coworkers, you have to turn them into allies. Do this in the beginning by focusing on external issues, which will get everyone batting for the same team.

Start by looking at the customer issue. Think in "customer language" by keeping questions like the Following omnipresent:

- Why do customers consider us?
- Why do customers choose us?
- Why do customers stay?
- Why do customers leave?

Once your knowledge of the competitive situation of the organization. Analyze the relationship of your own operating unit to the overall competitive success of the organization. Continually communicate the importance of tasks and projects. Plan events to keep internal competition at the forefront.

2. Work skillfully inside. Identify the colleagues Who are aligned with your purpose. Find out what is important for them, and keep their priorities and goals in mind when planning events. Pull them into your plans to make the organization more responsive to customers.

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In this way, you can gain more control over events and outcomes, and you will influence important allies.

3. Keep your focus sharply on your purpose.

Don't lose sight of what is important. Nothing will work better for your career than gaining a reputation for producing and being results-oriented. At the same time, keep the focus away from yourself. Don't force yourself up on center stage. Support everyone who is involved in your efforts. And make sure that these people receive credit. Remember: peer acceptance can help you. One of the best ways to get power and influence is to give it away.

4. Distance yourself from those playing the "ain't it awful" game. People who complain have a negative influence on coworkers and events.

Complainers pull you down and cast a strong pall over an organization. Management recognizes this, and any good performer feels the same way. So, if you are upbeat, this is a positive. It is both a positive and a must for success. Bottom line: Stay away from these people – they are just as toxic as a really bad boss.

5. Assess the situation. You have put your all into investigating a new direction and self-image for your

boss and your department. Now it is time to take stock of any progress you might have made by asking yourself the following questions:

- Is my boss onboard with the change agenda?
- Is my change agenda producing any positive movement in the organization?
- Are my peers allied with the status quo or are they motivated to change?

Sometimes there is no pressure to change anything. If an organization has been successful, or perceives itself as such, your boss and coworkers may not see a need to change, or feel compelled to step outside of the routine. If you have tried in earnest to up performance but failed to get buy-in from your boss, start looking outside the organization.

RUN, DON'T WALK!

Complacent management together with an apathetic or unmotivated workforce spells disaster dead ahead. You need to get out of there. Some companies can stay afloat with dead weight, but you are better off jumping ship and finding a situation in which your self-motivation, high performance, and risk taking are encouraged and rewarded. Run, don't walk to the nearest headhunter. The job you walk away from today may not be there tomorrow anyway.