

# Five ways to manage a bad boss

December 2, 2013

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Sylvia Pennington

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How do I struggle to work with thee, let me count the ways ... difficult bosses are legion, as almost anyone who has ever been an employee can attest.

Latest research from Ohio State University suggests the chronic stress of working for one can even affect the way our immune systems function over the longer term.

Bad bosses are the anti-heroes of a host of movies and television shows, from David Brent of *The Office* fame, to *The Devil Wears Prada's* terrifying ice queen Miranda Priestly.

On the silver screen their uppance does generally come, but it's a different story in real life where the choices for underlings often appear limited to "put up and shut up", or move on.

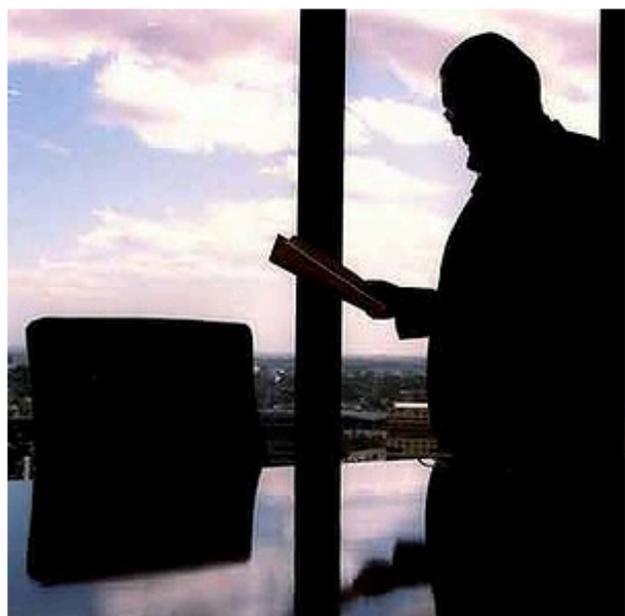
Executive coach and Liberate Leadership founder Suzanne Mercier says many employees choose the latter option rather than sticking it out under duress. "People join companies and leave managers," she says.

So what are the options for those who don't fancy striking out somewhere new?

Here's our roll call of bad bosses, and some ways to wrangle them.

## The control freak

Tell me what you want me to do and leave me to get on with it ... this will never happen if the control freak or micro-manager boss is running the show.



Don't let him ruin that dream job. Photo: Mayu Kanamori

If you have one of these hovering incessantly, there are a couple of options, organisational psychologist Virginia Mansell says. One is to grit your teeth while you update them on your progress (again!); the other is to understand why they do what they do.

Usually they're feeling under the pump and worried; either because of tough times in the market or fears about their own ability to perform.

Allay their concerns by offering them what they need, as often as they need it, before they have the chance to ask, Mansell advises.

"Give them all the data and information they want," she says.

"Check back after a while to see if it's frequent enough. Give them what they want until they feel comfortable."

And if there are tasks they're loathe to relinquish, despite their elevation up the ranks, try asking them directly to pass on the baton, business coach Lisa Phillips adds. As in: "I would really like to learn this, it's important to me."

### **The nitpicker**

Is everything you do analysed and found wanting or torn to pieces by the person you report to? Commiserations, you've scored yourself a nitpicking boss; someone who seems congenitally incapable of recognising or praising the efforts of their team.

Two choices, says Mercier. Let yourself get caught up in the negativity, or practise stepping away and learning to acknowledge your own strengths and weaknesses, irrespective of the opinions of others.

"Get your foundation solid," Mercier says. "Don't look to the boss for validation. It's not about being arrogant but of taking stock of our own skills and talents."

### **The bully**

Being bullied at work is no fun and when your boss is the culprit, it can be unbearable. Many in this position chose to resign but if that's not an option, consider compiling a detailed list of goings-on before seeking HR assistance, Phillips says. Better to object to specific behaviours than appear to be having a whinge about someone you just don't get on with.

And if you're feeling brave, try speaking up yourself once in a while, she says.

"You need to set boundaries. Say if something is unacceptable to you – the boss is not a mind reader. Pull them up on their behaviour if you feel confident, rather than let it go."

### **The disorganised**

It's Friday, 4pm and who's this bearing down, pile of papers in hand and determined expression on face? It's the disorganised boss, ready to ruin your weekend because something they didn't attend to earlier has morphed into a last-minute emergency.

Sometimes you'll have to suck it up – but don't do it too often, unless you want to spend every Sunday with your laptop, Phillips advises. It's reasonable to say you have plans which preclude

you delivering a report by 9am Monday. Mr or Ms Muddle may even improve their planning skills a little if they realise it's not a given that someone else will step into the breach, she says.

## The MIA

The Missing in Action boss isn't malevolent – they're just never there. It's a problem when they're supposed to be your conduit to the rest of the firm.

“This person doesn't help get you the resources you need, or hook you into the rest of the organisation,” Mercier says.

Her workaround? Make it your mission to build a strong network of your own, Cosy up to people in other departments, especially those who hold the purse strings or have some sway.

“Don't go behind [your boss's] back but do go around them,” Mercier says. “Understand where the power comes from.”

And, given that a strong network may be the key to securing your next role higher up the ladder, be grateful circumstances have forced you to become more proactive, she adds.

Read more: <http://www.theage.com.au/executive-style/management/five-ways-to-manage-a-bad-boss-20131201-2yjj0.html#ixzz2mMJlvFsv>

Comments:

## 62 comments

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You missed one...  
The sociopath....

Commenter  
*Sabai Sabai*  
Location

Date and time  
December 02, 2013, 8:53AM

○

You are so right. Studies have found that the two groups with the highest prevalence of sociopathic behaviour prisoners and CEOs.  
You also forgot the "Kiss up kick down boss". The delights of the corporate world.

Commenter  
*JB*  
Location

Date and time  
December 02, 2013, 11:16AM

○

And the most common: the incompetant.  
Used to be that most managers had a vague idea how to the do the job of those they are managing. Now days "senior" appears to be a qualification. No skill or people skills just a nice suit and...seniority. The boomer grey ceiling is part of the problem, the redundancy of human labour as we mechanise and globalise is another. thje older I get the more I apreciate bottom-up processes...top down just spoils the ego idiots.

Commenter  
*Andy*  
Location  
Melb  
Date and time  
December 02, 2013, 12:32PM

○

I was alerted to boss-sociopaths many years ago through an article by the eminent Australian psychiatrist John Ellard. I worked for one for over 20 years. The damage he did to me and many others was indescribable before being removed.

Commenter  
*RustedHalo*  
Location  
  
Date and time  
December 02, 2013, 1:03PM

○

Sylvia write: 'Latest research from Ohio State University suggests the chronic stress of working for one can even affect the way our immune systems function over the longer term.'  
Actually the research has been more conclusive than that since 2009 - indeed an Australian girl, Elizabeth Blackburn, won the 2009 Nobel Prize in Medicine (here in San Francisco) for linking chronic stress (stress that carries over from one day to the next) and the inhibition of Telomerase release from your brain... meaning your Telomeres are not repaired (Telomeres protect the end of your DNA chromosomes). Such DNA damage leads to immune cell weakening (as you suggested), and just as importantly links to heart disease, cancer, and diabetes. Luckily this crucial information is taught now in MBA courses - essentially no one is supposed to 'manage' people; you lead people and manage resources/finances... you can't blame someone for being promoted when they aren't qualified to lead others - it is the organization's fault for not training them first. This is not a role you can 'learn on the job' - you're impacting the health of many people, including one's own.

Commenter  
*Bourkie*  
Location  
San Francisco  
Date and time  
December 02, 2013, 1:57PM

•

I once worked in a major retail organisation and one boss I had was certainly incompetent. In fact she failed on several levels. She was a poor planner, a nitpicker and had no concept of the logistics involved in running my area of the business. Her product knowledge was virtually non-existent. Furthermore, she played favourites. So what did I do? I left, got qualified in another field and dumped retailing altogether.

Commenter  
*Hiram Smeckles*  
Location  
  
Date and time  
December 02, 2013, 9:17AM

post of the day.

Commenter  
*markymark*  
Location  
sydney  
Date and time  
December 02, 2013, 12:43PM

Nobody loves their job that much. Even JK Rowling was snapped rolling her eyes.

If you can't stand the heat, get out of the kitchen.

Life is too short to be surrounded by assholes.

Fact.

Google it.

Or if you want your daily life to be bearable, check out Cyanide and Happiness.

Commenter Ronaldo  
Location Warmest window sill in Sydney  
Date and time December 02, 2013, 9:41AM

The control freak: Ask them how often they want updates, keep to that specified schedule so they can see if they're asking too often. If they ask for something too often despite the schedule ask if they need to set up a meeting to rescope the parameters of the update schedule - meetings take time, decisions have to be made, this is time-taking, work-time wasting, and can point out that they are, once again, wasting your time. If they want updates too often in a formalised manner tell them - it will take x amount of time to do the update, I do that y times per z = however much work time gone, and also interrupting your flow at work. interruptions are bad for your output rate and quality, and as a manager it is their job to make sure they don't negatively impact those things. Essentially I find that The control freak types don't understand they're doing badly by their staff, and need to be shown in a clear, non-emotional way that is quantifiable. They can then logically alter their behaviour, and if they don't you can directly ask them to leave you be, as they have already been shown their impacts.

Commenter Raida

Location chewing salty razors

Date and time December 02, 2013, 10:23AM

I had a female manager in Local Government that was all of the above, I quit a job I loved, she is still there and from what I hear from contacts Rate Payers would die if they new how incompetent she is with rate Payer monies.

Commenter Rosie

Location

Date and time December 02, 2013, 10:24AM

Blow a whistle!

Commenter L

Location Melbourne

Date and time December 02, 2013, 1:01PM

No one ever want to talk about the bad employee - late, lazy, unreliable, disruptive, elitist , undermining, bullying and intimidating, self promoting and almost impossible to get rid off. Yike - who would want to be a boss

Commenter Good Grief

Location J Bay

Date and time December 02, 2013, 10:29AM

My thoughts exactly!

Commenter *Penelope*

Location

Date and time December 02, 2013, 10:55AM

This excellent article is about managing the Bad Boss and they do exist. Perhaps The Age will publish another article about managing the Bad Employee and, yes, I do believe you, there are lots of them. In the meantime let's concentrate on the Big Kahuna who through total incompetence, serious personality flaws and an inability to accept constructive criticism drives good (and bad) employees out of employment. Let's face it, nobody enjoys being unemployed but sometimes you must jump ship to safeguard your sanity.

Commenter H

Location

Date and time December 02, 2013, 11:45AM

If you have a bad employee you usually manage them out of the business....Its a bit harder for employees to manage out their boss, so its about strategies when working with a difficult boss.....see the point of the article?

Commenter *shemp*

Location melb

Date and time December 02, 2013, 12:35PM

Three In One - I have had the Boss

and it wasn't easy to even stand up to him or pull him aside

I change rolls and still have to deal with him and he still finds a way to give me a hard time.

Suggestions are easy written down and when someone has given them to you but to put them into practice is really hard, esp when you are terrified.

HR is useless, easier to get on with it.

Commenter Bullied, Nitpicked & controlled

Location

Date and time December 02, 2013, 10:50AM

This is why people should join unions.My husband has been in a situation where he was not bullied but his colleagues were and HR was useless. He talked to them about joining a union and approached the union with them when they joined, providing evidence. The result - the bully has left the building.

Commenter *MLK*

Location Blue Mountains

Date and time December 02, 2013, 1:29PM

There could be another: "Queen / King of the Mountain", one who has been provided the power to ensure that there must be no one to outshine their lack of intelligence. These managers proceed to whittle down anyone they perceive as threats; they are paranoid and likely have spies/moles. They live by the sword but display sociopathic tendencies, pretending to be nice and will wait for the right moment to strike down those who "make them look bad".

Remember, HR is *\*only\** there to support management decisions, not as a sounding board for employee grief! HR is there primarily to assist with potential legal issues for the company. In fact any grief made by an employee can be used by HR against the employee. When leaving a job, never give your reasons at exit interview time; again that can be worked against you even after you leave the company, the information is only used to support the managers.

@Good Grief - you must remember that bad employees are there only because they are supported by their horrible manager. It ALL points to the manager!

Unfortunately there are far too many toxic working cultures. Many companies purposely and knowingly hire dodgy/pathetic managers to "get the dirty work done", to improve the bottom line etc. This can work, yes; however if you have a happier workforce with trusted management, it actually yields stronger profits! The rewarded (not just financially) employees actually WANT to work there, put in the extra mile and add value. This has been proven time and again.

Positive workplaces with positive leadership MUST come from the VERY top. Are you reading this you CEOs out there? Get it!

Commenter AllBadManagersMustLeave

Location

Date and time December 02, 2013, 11:32AM

On the twelfth day of August,  
HR sent to me  
Twelve nasty emails,  
Eleven voicemails ignored,  
Ten nosey parkers,  
Nine decisions deferred,  
Eight cheques a-bouncing,  
Seven nits a-picking,  
Six Directors shouting,  
Five broken phones,  
Four missed calls,  
Three pink slips,  
No parking spot,  
And a psychopath in a boardroom!

Commenter Caffetierra Moka

Location Sector 7-G

Date and time December 02, 2013, 11:39AM

I'm really not sure that the most sound advice for an employee of a micromanager is to give in to them, which is essentially what you're suggesting. This won't curtail their behaviour, nor will it allow you to get on with the job. A control freak won't relinquish control - if they think their methods have got the employee on the hop, they'll double their efforts, since the employer's behaviour has seemingly been rewarded and achieved it's desired affect.

Anyone got a success story from working with one of these bosses we can genuinely learn from?

Commenter Unsure

Location CBD

Date and time December 02, 2013, 12:01PM

I've always wondered what would happen if you responded to a micro-manager in kind. Asking them for "advice" and "permission" to do even the most mundane and basic of tasks just so they can see how useless and pointless their incessant need to be kept up to date on what you are doing at any moment is.

Commenter *Kev*

Location

Date and time December 02, 2013, 1:28PM

@Unsure... Yep.. What i did was take up the offer by HR to go see an outside psychologist (EPA program offered to all). Having spent 1 hour looking out the window in the psych's office, she asked why i was there? ME: "Oh, i'm here so that i now have a record of visiting you to gain evidence of my stress and bullying from a p\*\*\*k i work with"

When my manager next tried pulling his bastard bulls\*\*t on me, i mentioned that i had been and there was a record of it... his response: "oh my, i've never been mean or horrible, how did you come to that conclusion, i though we are friends?" ...

That stopped him in his tracks!

Commenter *Steve*

Location Melbz

Date and time December 02, 2013, 2:52PM

Well I'm the nitpicker and I make absolutely no appologies for it, because it's my arse and wallet on the line when my staff get it wrong.

Commenter

*poppinj*

Location Ballarat

Date and time December 02, 2013, 12:06PM

ahhhh, but if the you trained your staff and had open, ongoing feedback sessions one on one, then, maybe just maybe, you could focus on actually running and building your business!

I had a mentor who once said to me...." the objective of a good boss is to make themselves redundant". But don't take my word for it, I just ran a business for 10 years and sold it as an ongoing concern and then moved back into the corporate world as a senior manager.....

Commenter *shemp*

Location melb

Date and time December 02, 2013, 12:39PM

Hi poppinj - I think needing to know the details is not a bad thing in and of itself. It is all in \*how\* you ask for the information and the manner in which you support your staff in retrieving the information. If you demonstrate reasonable trust in your employees, they will \*want\* to get it right not just for you, but for your customers, your organisation and for themselves.

Commenter *AllBadManagersMustLeave*

Location

Date and time December 02, 2013, 12:57PM

An excellent case in point for both sides- you can still be a nitpicker without being an asshole (and no, am not calling you that at all) about it. It is the manner of nitpicking and how different personalities are able to deal with it. Eg most people respond better and more productively to 'what do you think if..', rather than 'why did you.....' In my opinion, the ability to be able to provide insight and advisory whilst also providing a positive morale versus the negativity of nitpicking basically comes down to people skills. Just my two cents.....

Commenter *mikatamatt*

Location earth

Date and time December 02, 2013, 1:08PM

The nitpicker - plant some nits to be picked, distracting attention from the things you don't want picked.

The MIA - that should be every go-getter's dream. Just fill the vacuum, and don't completely expose the MIA as being surplus to requirements, just be discreet enough to let certain people see what you're able to do without help from above.

The micromanager - I agree with @Unsure - stand up to them, call them out on it. Better than meek surrender.

Commenter rudy

Location

Date and time December 02, 2013, 12:22PM

I once had a micro-managing P.I.T.A. boss. Totally unreasonable in their expectations. Pig of a man. I didn't bother trying to deal with it, I just left.

A few years later I was in a job interview. The interviewer, on looking through my resume, asked me about my experiences working with said mico-manager as they were friends! Not wanting to burn bridges, I said glowing things about him. I did, however, decline the offer of a second interview. Any friend of this person was not someone I wanted to work for. Not worth the risk. I have a great boss now. Couldn't be happier. :)

Commenter Mark

Location Hursty

Date and time December 02, 2013, 12:30PM

The boss before my current one was the nitpicker, micro-manager and control freak. He would get me to fill in timesheets that were in 15 minute blocks because he wanted to make sure I wasn't "cruising" which was nothing but a waste of time and an exercise to satiate his massive ego, two weeks after he started he insulted me by saying he needed to make sure I was the "right person for the job" and when I asked if I was going to be replaced he laughed and said "you've never been micromanaged before have you?", he once came into my office and asked if I was "being efficient today" which is neither here nor there, he also had the nerve to get me to do a task rather than getting a contractor to do it because I was "cheaper" and while I don't disagree with the premise of it, it didn't do much for morale to be told your work was considered cheap and the last one was when he argued with me over my decision to prioritize one job over another. Apart from the fact that I have a considerable amount of autonomy in the job, both jobs were urgent and his decision to take me to task over it came across as him wanting to show me "who was boss" and I was in a no win situation because even if I flipped around priorities, he would still find something whinge about if one took longer to complete than expected. Lasted 3 months with this idiot before finding a new job at a higher rate of pay and with a far more competent manager.

Commenter Kev

Location

Date and time December 02, 2013, 12:30PM

Good Topic.

But not sure about the author. According to LinkedIn she is a freelance writer, self-employed, not

sure about if she know about corporate world working condition. In " The Bully" she wrote "seeking HR assistance", she forgot that HR is part of the management team. The best idea is if you are bullied seek help from Fair Work Australia. Currently you can claim work care on bullying, but in the new year ( if TA don't chnage the rule), Fair Work Australia will be able to help.

Commenter Cynics

Location

Date and time December 02, 2013, 12:45PM

I have always "Trained my Boss" from day 1 in every job I have ever had.

And I have worked for some right bastards but I never had a problem with them as they knew from day 1 I give as good as I get and stand for no bullshit on the other hand I am very very good at what I do and maintain a professional approach at all times so tend to get away with a lot someone less skilled might not.

Has always worked for me but you got to get the word in day 1 none of this shrinking violet compliant little mouse crap.

Also found teaching your boss Tony Buzans's "Mind Mapping" and "Six hats Parallel thinking techniques" a great step in the right direction, has never failed for me.

But old rules apply,"if you can't stand the heat get out of the kitchen", because this is WORK not kindergarten and only the toughest, leanest, fastest and smartest survive.

Commenter Toys will get Played

Location

Date and time December 02, 2013, 12:46PM

Toys will get Played - well, whatever has occurred in your work-life, your ego remains undamaged. You will make a terrific boss for some poor beggar. Your thought control techniques are truly amazing.

Ryan - yes, HR - the name says it all Human Resources. Resources' being something the company considers it owns - like Physical Resources. Only Human.

HR is full of ignorant blowhards. Incapable of any sort of conversation, uninformed and usually fat boozy slobs. When I am confronted with a true idiot for the first time, when they are either glammed up mutton or fat old boozers in expensive suits, my first guess is they are HR (don't they love the title HR Director). Having either learned all the deceits 'on the job' or having obtained a 'degree' from some mediocre college somewhere out in the sticks. The last bastion of the scoundrel, professing 'care' while making sure you get screwed. Always happy to distort language, to scheme and exercise complete carelessness, while painting themselves as concerned. I have never had a run in with one of these types, but I have observed plenty. All dills. No foundation to anything they do.

Commenter *Max Million*

Location Melbourne

Date and time December 02, 2013, 1:56PM

Sorry Sylvia... Most of this seems to be motherhood and apple pie. And given that you have referenced Suzanne Mercier 5 or 6 times, it is obvious that this piece is merely a review of her work.

“Get your foundation sold,” Mercier says. “Don't look to the boss for validation.” What on earth does that mean? I am not looking to a nitpicker for validation, I am looking for them to sod off and leave me alone.

"Pull them up on their behaviour if you feel confident, rather than let it go.”

If you feel confident? Of course you don't feel confident. They are your boss, a bully, and have enormous power over you.

“Don't go behind [your boss's back but do go around them”

And the difference is...?

Commenter Office Rabbit

Location

Date and time December 02, 2013, 12:47PM

It's a game that bosses play, play the game and drive them mad.

Commenter Culprit

Location Melbourne

Date and time December 02, 2013, 12:58PM

and there's also the 'yes' man. this kind of boss will say yes to anything his/her superiors ask, and you're left holding the baby while they swan around being such a 'team player'

at no time do they have any regard or knowledge of how strained their team already is, but that can do anything attitude is what irks me the most!

for me, i guess it all boils down to leadership... for those wanting a decent read on the topic, try Joseph Nye

Commenter steve

Location melbz

Date and time December 02, 2013, 1:05PM

Most bosses micromanage as a way to make themselves feel important and useful. It never ceases to amaze me how important some of these bosses think they are and how seriously they take themselves.

Commenter Craig

Location Sydney

Date and time December 02, 2013, 1:05PM

I worked with a bully - team leader in my group - it took her 3 weeks to launch on me standing above me, poking her finger in my direction and shouting that us Aussies are all the same (she's a Kiwi and I'm guessing something Rugby related had happened) Given that I had a huge crowd of gobsmacked witnesses I calmly stood up and said "sit down and shut up, you're no match for me". I put up with her for 18 months before moving on and up and she was fired a few weeks later after posting her drunken escapades on FB and then calling in with family emergencies shortly thereafter. My current boss has an ego that is beyond description. Normally that wouldn't bother me. Dropping names here and there makes no difference to my work life but spending more time networking to "get my name out there" without considering your employees (we were to be made redundant...not him...us) really rubs me the wrong way. Bending down and making out like I was picking something up "Oh here you go, you dropped this" "What is it" "a name" .... and he has now moved on.

Commenter Melissa

Location

Date and time December 02, 2013, 1:07PM

I have extensive experience in software development as a permie in Australia and as both a contractor and a permie in UK \ Europe . I have had a few brilliant bosses , many ok. bosses and a very few bad bosses .

In my experience the bad bosses do huge amounts of damage to their companies . I've seen a boss tank a large company in Australia - 95% loss , then 98% loss , then massive debt followed by restructuring to avoid actual bankruptcy and still more massive debt . In the UK - a company that in 15 years has never made a profit - just lived of shareholders funds . In Germany - a boss that tanked a perfectly workable project .

On the opposite side - I've seen brilliant bosses who have produced very profitable working companies .

A good boss basically is a person of good character - civilised , ethical and moral , full integrity , down to earth and a lot of commonsense . They act responsibly , have faith in the staff , support their staff . Very importantly they have the mechanisms in place . For software development this is Formal Methods . Further they have a good supportive working atmosphere - this includes interaction to such a level that oversight and mentoring occur naturally .

Basically - what goes around comes around . If you do the right thing good things will happen to you , and vice versa .

The one thing that my clients are looking for is whether they can trust me to do a good job . This is looking at 'good job' in the broadest of all the definitions . This reliability and integrity is key .

Commenter Kim

Location UK , Europe , Perth

Date and time December 02, 2013, 1:11PM

Cheers, Kim, this is a great comment.

Some things I would raise:

"Basically - what goes around comes around . If you do the right thing good things will happen to you , and vice versa"

I, too, thought that for decades, until a clique of very bad managers proved the opposite is true. It is

a numbers game and if those who will lie and cheat to get an outcome are numerous enough, the only thing that comes from having done right as an employee at their mercy is real heartbreak from the injustice.

When " getting away with" maltreatment is all that counts, there is no morality or justice, no matter how much right the employee has done or has on their side.

The government sector is different from the private sector, too. Bad management proliferates and there is no accountability, rather the entire system closes ranks to prevent truth on many things, including gross mismanagement, getting out.

Every year, Fairfax reports the government's People Matters survey, which always shows high rates of bullying in the state sector. That is illegal under Victorian laws but that seems not to matter to the government which makes those laws.

Commenter *BC*

Location Date and time December 02, 2013, 1:55PM

Unless you have proof of mis-behaviour against you by management that could result in a successful law suit against the company, my advice is to never to involve HR as there is not a thing they will do about it. The primary function of HR is to ensure the business and it's management are complying with all employment related laws, and if they are, the management - who pays their salary, who they report to and who has the power to hire and fire them, will always be the one in the right.

In my experience working with a large American corporate for many many years, I have seen countless employees take complaints to HR that go nowhere, and in fact ends up being an unpleasant experience for them rather than the manager they are complaining about. HR will never get you the result you want if it is just a case of a nagging or nit-picking or micro-managing boss. You either have to suck it up or move on, because if it's just a case of the manager being a pain in the arse, that unfortunately will remain your problem and your problem alone. HR in most cases won't do a thing about it unless there are probable and provable legal consequences to the manager's behavior against you.

Commenter Ryan

Location

Date and time December 02, 2013, 1:14PM

What about my old boss? The a\_\_\_hole? Where nothing mattered what you did, everything was always wrong, crap and he knew better about absolutely everything. He also bullied and patronised his staff in public and in front of clients. I bet there is no solution to that except resign, which the entire staff did all at once!

Commenter *azza*

Location

Date and time December 02, 2013, 1:21PM

I agree with Andy (above). The incompetent was always my worst nightmare - like the Director of HR with NO people skills. She read all the theories but couldn't get on with people. It was always our fault that we did not conform to her reading.

But the real thing that was missing was any capacity for leadership. Leaders can communicate the big picture (not gabble endlessly about bench marking against world's best practice) and work with

the people while mammoth changes to operating systems are undertaken. They listen to the problems their staff face and make sure the problems are solved. They attend the training workshops and appreciate how demanding the changes are. They hold morning teas to celebrate big achievements and make generous speeches to farewell staff who are leaving.

Commenter MJM

Location

Date and time December 02, 2013, 1:28PM

Seeking HR assistance for bullying by a manager is not the answer. HR's function is to protect the company, not the employee. HR sociopaths are very good at manipulating a person who is vulnerable and open to suggestion to achieve their desired outcome. The vast majority of workplace bullying allegations investigated internally are not substantiated.

Good article here: <http://www.abc.net.au/unleashed/4156378.html>

Commenter

*Ptuj*

Location

Melbourne

Date and time

December 02, 2013, 1:28PM

Sylvia,

People have ended up in diabolical situations involving bullying and the above advice does not do justice to the gravity of that circumstance. The measures you advise are similar to what WorkSafe advised at my workplace in a situation of very serious bullying.

The outcomes were:

- Intensified bullying
- Government and all other "investigators" refused to look at 200 pages recording incidents and mistreatment
- The bullied party concerned was forced out of work, with so much damage to health that they never worked again and ended up chronically unwell, and their work record trashed despite a mountain of objective evidence that their work performance was outstanding, notwithstanding the bullying.
- No help whatsoever from the system that should have prevented this, or at least provided restorative support. Not one government office would assist, including the Ombudsman.

At least two lives (victims of the bullying) have been ruined as a result, and many people indirectly harmed. The consequences have never stopped, rather snowballing on.

It's an incredibly serious subject. The media never reports on its true gravity and people suddenly face it totally unprepared for that reason. It needs to be dealt with in terms of the real world.

Bullying perpetrators are not being pressured into obeying, not breaking, the law. Why should victims have to flee, as with domestic violence?

It is never easy to just leave a job, least of all when all energies are commandeered to this. It takes time, focus, references to change jobs and bullying actually disrupts all.

Why is corporate Australia not concerned about bullying, especially \$36 billion lost to the economy in productivity yearly, if not about the damage done to people's lives?

For the seriousness of bullying, please see submissions to the Federal Government's Inquiry into Workplace Bullying:

[http://www.aph.gov.au/parliamentary\\_business/committees/house\\_of\\_representatives\\_committees?url=ee/bullying/subs.htm](http://www.aph.gov.au/parliamentary_business/committees/house_of_representatives_committees?url=ee/bullying/subs.htm)

Commenter Re bullying

Location Date and time December 02, 2013, 1:31PM

Please be aware that audio primary evidence is superior to written accounts - and that you should go directly to a lawyer for legal advice. Once your HR & (hence) Legal departments are aware you are serious they will act knowing that the organization is now legally culpable. Do not bother treading carefully when it comes to serious bullying - this is your physical health at stake.

Commenter *Bourkie*

Location San Francisco

Date and time December 03, 2013, 4:39AM

My manager is less qualified than me yet imposes her will on my clinical decision making well outside her scope of practice. She lacks the intellectual capacity to understand when she is out of her depth in clinical matters and cannot see where her responsibility begins and ends. She means well but treats the staff in that benevolent bullying manner some coaches use for teenage netball teams. She was not appointed on merit but fell into the job after the previous manager left. I would leave and seek another job except I am married to the senior partner and live in a rural community with very limited job opportunities. So I just have to suck it up and try not to rock the boat. Fortunately my partner is very supportive but despite his significant role in the business he has limited influence partly because the others don't really know or understand what goes on behind the scenes and don't really care as long as their bank balances stay nice and positive.

Commenter Money tree

Location NSW

Date and time December 02, 2013, 1:40PM

So basically normal people have to alter their own behaviour to accommodate the shortcomings of others?

Also the term "boss" is soooo 20th century - I've had many managers but the idea that someone could be my "boss" is anathema to me.

Commenter Mighty Zeus

Location Muckertal

Date and time December 02, 2013, 1:45PM

I had a boss in education who was all of these, except MIA. There's always lots of advice like this article several times a year, however the support from above is non-existent and often works against anyone who reports unacceptable behaviour. You need to find another position (and unfortunately accept that your skills will be wasted there)

Commenter Marty

Location Date and time December 02, 2013, 2:13PM

I had a boss once who used to tell us, 'the more we do today, the less we have to do tomorrow', guess what, tomorrow never came.

Commenter Dudeminator

Location Date and time December 02, 2013, 2:14PM

Good article - I like the way that the solutions involve the employee continuing to deliver, appeasing their bosses somewhat, and dealing with the problem in a rational, productive way. You can't change your boss, but you can be good at your job and make the most of any situation.

Nothing worse than a whinger.....

Commenter Axel

Location Perth

Date and time December 02, 2013, 2:23PM

I just came off ten straight months working for the most evil, psychopathic I monster I have ever met. His deplorable humiliating behaviour was simply constant. And there were others before me - and several of them - who he had driven out of the organisation. Upper management were well aware of his "style" and how could they not notice anyway? Everyone who has worked for him the past few years has left shortly after! But of course upper management never acted on this because they are spineless. Also - and this is just a guess - the rigmarole of ticking all these boxes in order to sack someone is probably a bit too much for senior management. Anyway, after ten long months of this crazy, incompetent bully, myself and another poor lamb who worked for him, got out of his department altogether. And along the way, let the senior people know some very specific aspects of his totally out-of-step - and often - outside POLICY behaviour! They've got him on a pretty tight leash now. My colleague and I couldn't be happier in our new roles, and the smart money is that this loser who we wasted ten months of our lives with, will likely not be with the organisation a whole lot longer.

It can be done. Just make sure you do it right.

Commenter

*PaulyD*

Location Date and time December 02, 2013, 2:51PM

I can't stand the current one I'm lumbered with. Egomaniacal, moody, mind changing, full of sh!t on and on it goes.

I cannot stand being asked for my opinion to have each and everything I say poo poo'd and rubbished. Here's a news flash.....DON'T ASK IF YOU KNOW YOU WON'T EVEN CONSIDER THE ANSWER.

I just love the fact that these managers that are one of (or in a lot of cases it appears all of) these bosses have the audacity to act like Gods and Kings. For heaven's sake you're not inventing or managing a group of people that have finally cured the common cold or found an pill that actually gets rid of cancer. You're managers of people that in most cases are just wanting to get on with life and enjoy the trip.

Commenter misserable

Location Date and time December 02, 2013, 3:29PM

Timely piece Suzanne. Thanks Sylvia for the reminder regarding Elizabeth Blackburn's work.

Commenter Jon Pratlett

Location Sydney

Date and time December 02, 2013, 4:07PM

Read more: <http://www.theage.com.au/executive-style/management/five-ways-to-manage-a-bad-boss-20131201-2yjj0.html#ixzz2mMO96R7e>

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