



Draper Notes

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Seven Signs Your Manager Wants You Out

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When you're working for someone who is threatened by your ideas, you'll know it. Your boss will send you signals that your energy, intellect and creativity aren't welcome.

First, the signals will be small. Your boss is trying to tamp down your growing flame before it gets any bigger.

If you don't get the message "Pipe down and do what I tell you - and nothing else!" the messages will get louder. You may have been the department's star employee, but now you're persona non grata.



If your boss is really afraid of you, you may even find yourself being pulled into some kind of disciplinary action -- a pathetic attempt to try to stomp out your flame.

Your boss might become fearful enough to diminish you, squash you or try to drive you out. Why would your boss do that? It happens every day, perhaps because you're getting noticed by higher-ups in the organization or becoming too popular with your firm's customers.

Fearful managers don't build their employees up - they tear them down. Only docile and obedient sheep are welcome in fear-filled environments. If you are too vocal, too smart, too creative, or just too much like yourself instead of the corporate or institutional drone your boss wants you to be, watch out!

Here are seven signs your boss wants you out. When you notice these signs in your environment, don't be discouraged or get angry. That would be a waste of your precious mojo! The bigger your flame gets, the more likely you are to face these fear reactions. That's okay!



There are much bigger sandboxes to play in than whatever box you're working in now. The universe will signal you when it's time to find a bigger box, and although change can be hard, you'll be much happier on the other side of your reinvention!

Taking Away Perks

One of the early signs that you've triggered a fear reaction from your boss will be the withdrawal of perks and bennies. Our client Daniel had the nerve to win two awards from his division President and soon after saw his boss take away his Business Class travel privileges and his airport club membership.

"You don't travel enough to justify those expenses," his boss said, against all reason. His boss was more than merely miffed. His boss was afraid Daniel's reputation as a rising star threatened his own power. He wanted to send Dan a strong message: "Back off and stop making a name for yourself here, or things will get worse for you."

The poor fearful boss wanted to wield his petty takeaway-power to get Daniel off balance. It didn't work.

Daniel started looking for a new job, and ended up in another division of his company, working as a peer to his old boss.



Keeping You in the Dark

Your boss used to tell you everything, but now you're completely in the dark. You don't know the plan for the department. You don't have a roadmap for your own role. What does it mean?

It means that your boss is trying to keep you trapped at a low altitude. That's no good for your emotional well-being or your career. You need a clear line of sight into the future at any job, and you deserve it.

Re-Assigning Your Plum Projects

Our client Leah was feeling shaky about her relationship with her boss, the CFO of a brokerage firm. "I told my boss that I could help him much more than I'm doing now," Leah told us. "My boss didn't answer. What could he say? He basically hates my guts ever since I presented to our Board of Directors and got good feedback from them. That was the last straw."



Leah's boss sent her an email message that said "I've asked Paul to take over the investor relations summit."

Organizing that summit had been Leah's largest project. It was the reason she took the job in the first place.

The CFO's one-sentence email message spoke volumes. Leah got her stealth job search going the same week, and had two interviews within a month.

"I can do a lot of things, but I can't work for someone who's working against me," she told us. She didn't need to do that for long. You don't either!

Ignoring You

Most Human Workplacers don't ask for a lot in a boss. All they want is to work for someone smart, ethical and honest. Some bosses can rise to the occasion and some cannot. Bogdan's manager Lenny hired Bog with great expectations for their partnership. "You're going to be my number two," he told Bog.



Bogdan made several smart operational suggestions within his first month on the job, and rather than being overjoyed, Lenny was put off.

"Just be clear that I'm the manager and you're the assistant manager," he said. Gradually he stopped meeting with Bogdan. He stopped replying to email messages.

"I tried for fifteen months to placate and please my boss," said Bog, "before I threw in the towel."

Finally he went to Lenny and said "Is this a mismatch? Should I start job-hunting?" That was too direct for Lenny, who nearly choked and couldn't speak. Later, Lenny sent Bogdan an email message and said "Yes, that's a good plan."

Needling You to Death

A sure sign that your flame is singeing your manager is when it seems that you can do nothing right. Your boss begins to pick and criticize everything you do. At first, you'll be puzzled.

You'll wonder how you could keep screwing up, being a sharp and competent person. You're worrying about the wrong thing.



The quality and quantity of your work hasn't changed -- your boss's support for you is what's missing. Fear is the topic we never discuss at work, although it's around us all the time. When your boss stops supporting you and decides you're an invasive species in his or her fishpond, nothing you do will be good enough.

Criticizing You in Public

When a manager gets rattled enough, he or she will start throwing barbs in your direction. Don't be surprised when your co-workers say "Geez, your boss said some harsh things about you in the meeting just now."

The limbic nerve controls the fight or flight reaction that we feel when we're in panic mode. When your boss has so little mojo him- or herself that the simple presence of a popular or high-performing team member feels like a threat, the knives will come out.

When your competence and confidence throw your boss into panic mode, get ready for the insults to fly.



Reorganizing You Out

Organizational charts are almost infinitely malleable. If your boss hates you enough, he or he can re-organize you right out the door.

Once you realize that you have made your boss anxious to the point of such extreme behaviors simply by being yourself, you'll stop feeling bad about the situation.

You'll stop blaming yourself for being smart and capable. You'll see that it's your fearful boss who has a problem, not you.

You'll realize that it's your personal power that has freaked your manager out. You might have to change jobs. That's okay! You weren't going to retire from this job, anyway.

It's jarring to get the signals that tell you the person who hired you cannot stand the heat of your flame any longer, but it's empowering, too. There's nothing negative about it, and most Human Workplace folks have had the experience a time or two.

Wait until you see how your mojo grows as you step out of a too-tight box and breathe fresh air again!