

Honest work. How to talk to HR and not have a heart-attack!

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Preface

I used to believe in hard work, honest work. I believed that honest work was pure, and it was like magic in that once done, it was just this awesome thing that no one could touch. Well, I still believe in honest work, I just now have the knowledge of many workplaces and teams. My experience in these teams has taught me something different. That much work is taken for granted and you do not get credit for it. I used to believe in honest hard work - and that it would give its own rewards. My mind has changed, and I do believe that the system of the modern work-place is rigged. It is rigged not for your success, but for the mediocre tasks that need to be done. It is designed and built so that those tasks get done, not that you get any credit for novel ideas, late hours, or sleepless nights due to client stress. The modern workplace is rigged against honest work. And if you do not know how to work the system, your hard, honest work will not get the reward it deserves. These words are here to help you do the great things that you do every day.

I have written on my experiences, and so there are short stories here. Stories with keynotes to focus on, at the end of each story. The last chapter has typical HR problems and how to deal with them. I hope you find this work inspiring and gives you strength to continue doing your best work.

This is about the workplace, the modern place where work is done. You can read about human resources, disabilities, bad bosses, and great bosses. Here are accommodations, including any accommodation, not just accommodations for disabilities. Remember you can always request an accommodation, no matter who you are!

I hope this helps you do honest work. And when you have done this honest work, you can go home at the end of the day feeling that you did a job well. The goal is this. To have honest work = job satisfaction.

Chapter 1

Meet the Fonz!

The Fonz was a loud and flashy dressing guy. He was usually dressed well, he appeared around 45 years of age. The Fonz was sometimes late for meetings. . .fashionably late? And then the Fonz was often late to work. He occasionally worked late - but I only recall seeing that once. This guy knew he was so good that he did not need to come into work on time! The Fonz was the talk of workplace, for sure. Commonly people spoke about the unprofessional nature of this guy boss. It was common knowledge that this guy was unique, and umm, a bit bizarre. Some examples of people talking about the Fonz:

"The Fonz tried to get me to buy 400 shirts from Thailand! He said he could get them for five dollars each! He was telling me all about this business he is trying to run while I am here in the office. Who does that?!!" said the employee.

"The Fonz walked into the training drill wearing running shorts! And freaky like 70s shorts that show a bunch of leg. What in the hell!! The district commander told him not to come back dressed like that!! It was hilarious." said another employee.

"That guy the Fonz, what the heck. He is crazy. Man, they broke the mold when they made the Fonz!" said one of my peers.

The Fonz made a name for himself, for sure. But he was also making business deals happen. He did seem to be a key player in making some large sales for the company. I could tell that this salesmanship gave him latitude and that we would be seeing the Fonz for a while.

The Fonz could talk, talk too much, often he would. At a company party my wife at the time met the Fonz. My wife, she thought he was a straight talker and probably she would like working with him. He did appear that way to many people.

We couldn't work and feel passionate about our leader if they were silent, right? You do talk a lot, right? Oh the Fonz could talk. On and on he would talk in meetings about some things that really, no one cared about. I was the opposite. Unfortunately for me, at this time in my career, I did not speak up enough. After a year or so with this boss, I found things I did not like. I should have told him? But I let it be, and I did my job. I was a leader of eight people, and we did some pretty great things as a team. Our team was strong. Yet our leader the Fonz, he did not really know what we did. Just not enough communication from all sides. Eventually, the Fonz met a new employee that did talk A LOT! He thought that new employee should take my place! Basically. Instead of telling me this as much, he told the new employee to tell me. The Fonz ordered this new employee to tell me – to tell me that he was taking my place! The new employee entered my office.

"Umm, you know I am going to take your place. . . this is what Don wants." said the employee.

"Hmmm. . . yeah I will have to talk to you about that." I spoke. I was surprised at this and basically stopped the conversation. I did not want to hear it. The Fonz had demoted me. I was not entirely shocked. Immediately after the conversation, what I SHOULD HAVE DONE is to go talk to the Fonz. I should have negotiated my role and that to make sure that I was still in some leadership position, even though this new guy was now my boss. Unfortunately, I did not do that. I let this new jackass basically take my place and let myself go of any leadership role. I grew tired in my non leadership role and found a new role in the same company that kept me busy. I talked to the Fonz now and then, but not often. A few months later, I had a new idea and thought I should bring it to the Fonz, as he could perhaps find a way to fund the idea and sell it. The Fonz was still my vacation approver, and he always approved my vacation quickly. I thought that that was a good and professional nature that he had, to at least approve people's vacation quickly. I just thought he probably had other good traits, and that I would eventually find them.

"This is really not that hard, we could do this for the client and I think it will work!" I said to the Fonz.

"Let's discuss this. . .but first, could you write something for the Vice President?" the Fonz asked me.

"Sure. . .I can write that up." I replied.

Before you know it, I was writing up the pages for the Vice President. I felt honored that the Fonz gave me the role. It was a privilege that he would only give a senior, trusted staff member. I was happy. Yet I also felt that my idea was thrown on the back burner. Basically, that I was just doing this for the Fonz, and that my idea was second class. I did the detailed task and many corrections and additions that were needed. I had no hard feelings for the Fonz and usually did not speak bad about him.

Takeaways

* Unprofessional nature is part of the modern workforce. Often there is a reason for it. For the Fonz, it was because the unprofessional person was a key salesman in the company. You will not always know why certain people get away with being rude, loud, or dressed weird. Just deal with it. Make sure you do not allow yourself to be sanctioned into unprofessionalism. Just because one person gets away with something does not mean that you will get away with the same stunt! You may be fired for that stunt!

* Always try to communicate about your role and where you want to be. If you don't want any change and are happy with your role, I would say you are in the wrong job. You should always want to improve your abilities to make things great. If you have any hint that a job review is coming up, or someone is going to take your job, then act! Reach out and have a conversation. Create a way to get the conversation heading into the direction you want. It is not easy. Put it in your calendar every week to think about how you will do it. Talk to others about what your boss likes to talk about. Eventually you will have enough information to have a conversation with your leader.

Chapter 2

Meet the commando!

Mr. T, the commando was a powerful figure at a large non-profit company I worked at. I had run into him a few times and had only short conversations, where I recall he was a bit helpful but also dismissive of the questions. I got the feeling that he did not particularly like me asking him questions. Which was ok, I figure he was the director and a busy guy. I was ok with him. I was ok with him not paying a lot of attention to my questions. I figured he is hard working guy, which I had seen do a lot of work. . . so I was not to worry.

Within what seemed like a few months, the commando, Mr. T., was silently promoted. A few people had left the company or were fired, which was also silently done. . .but anyway, yes Mr. T was now a big shot and in my chain of command! I was not really worried, yet.

Mr. T the commando had a way with words, and he had no problem stacking many tasks on people even while they were loaded with other work. I did not worry too much about added work. Mr. T. would also be very straight forward. It was obvious he would tell you straight up what he was thinking, most always. This is a good thing. Some people will not tell you what they are thinking. Some people just would not do that. Mr. T would surely tell you! He would also quickly dismiss, very rudely, certain conversations. He would tell you, "Shut up!!".

Near the elevator, I heard a conversation with Mr. T. and staff.

"Stop talking!" he would say and walk out of the elevator, effectively shutting down his staff who were arguing about something. It was a bit rude but that was his manner, and he was the boss. No one questioned him as the other stopped talking until Mr. T had walked away to his office.

**** The setup. ****

So at this time, I had a direct manager. My chain of command was this:

Me the worker -> reports to Michael -> Reports to Mr T

Michael was my direct manager. He was a decent manager, I would say. He had a couple of strong skills. One was that he did not get stressed out, no matter what happened. It was a miracle that Michael could work with and do the tasks thrown at him by the Commando. That was the most impressive thing! How that could be done, how you could work directly with the Commando without having a anxiety attack? A mystery! Michael was good and a multi-tasker. Throw five tasks at him (while he is struggling with two tasks). No problem. Emergency at the factory! Half of the production stops. . .a major problem, yet Michael the manager would not freak out, would not show any stress. I often thought wow, that is a skill. I had a friend who I car-pooled to work with. He also was impressed by my managers ability Michael, to stay calm.

So Michael was my manager, and Mr. T was the manager/boss of Michael. So perhaps you might think that I would not interact that much with Mr. T? Since I had a manager, Michael. That would be wrong. Mr. T interacted with anyone he wanted, at any time he wanted!

Simply put, Mr. T, he did not give a shit and would talk to anyone at any time.

** Note - I don't think there is anything wrong with that, by the way.

Work life with Mr. T, the director.

My days passed doing my job with Mr. T in my chain of command. I was not too worried. Honestly.

I had a job monitoring some computer systems, and it took up most my time. One day I found Mr T., at the entrance to my cube, while I worked. I can remember that it was not comfortable.

"Are you working. . . or are you on the phone. . . or are you thinking?", he said. The commando had spoken!

It was a bit rude, but mostly, I was ok with it.

"Oh yes, I am thinking, just got it figured out." I said. I had been looking for a paper on my desk, drawing a diagram and he appeared to think I was not working. I do not know.

For Mr. T, this was normal tactics. I had seen him to this to others, meaning check up on what they are doing. I was ok with it. Some people would call such periodic observances as a bad thing. They would call it "micro-managing" and label it as bad. Well, I knew it was indeed micro-managing, but I think that is an ok thing for a manager to do. I thought about this guy, and thought, maybe I would tell him about micro-managing. Bad idea!

"You know sir, I don't mind if you stand or sit there and watch what I do. You really can watch, even all day if you wish. I don't have an issue. Its a lot of steps and pretty repetitive, but you can indeed see what I do and why it takes so long. . . I do not have a problem.", I said.

"Huh ummm, ok" he said.

"Yeah I don't have a problem with micro-managing, I think it's necessary for managers". I said, feeling smart.

"Ah this is not micro-managing!" he said quickly.

I felt the conversation going sideways!

"o", I replied.

Before I could even finish my word "ok", much less compose another thought or word, Mr. T walked out of my cube. Without saying a word. I think I just pissed him off! Like he just walked away. . .and he left my cube. I thought that perhaps I had stuck my foot in my mouth. Like he had taken offense, that I was

labeling his behavior. Or worse, he was offended because I did not have the liberty to even mention such things to such a mighty director, Mr. T. Either way, I figure that I should not have said that, to him. I think this was the beginning of some bad times to come.

A few weeks later, our cube arrangements had been changed. I was now sitting in a smaller cube with another person, and we were both big guys. How my work thought this was an ok arrangement, I have no idea. And the other guy was sort of a prick at times. I thought this was not ideal. I was not getting along too well with my cube-mate. He would often give me what seemed like crap jobs, that he did not want to do. I figured us as peers, he seemed to think that he was superior to me in some ways. Whatever, I did not take all his crap and called him on some of his asks. On a phone call, I can hear my cube-mate discussing some tasks. Mr. T the directors office was only a short distance away.

"oh yeah, Rod can do that one thing." said my cube-mate.

I was pissed. . .why is this jack-ass giving me the crap jobs? My co-worker is delegating me tasks like he is my manager. I did not appreciate it. After confirming the crap job, I replied.

"Uhh no, I am not doing that! Duuude why do you think I should do that?" I said in a nerve pinching, questioning manner.

"Whatever." said my co-worker.

My co-worker makes a motion with his hand, like waving me away. Like dismissing that I would not help. Good, correct.

Wait, this is not good. No, no good. This is BAD! Mr. T. the director had been listening in behind us, the whole time!

"I see you guys can't get work done, together. What's wrong with you both!?" Mr. T said and walked away.

Oh shit!

I was stunned. It was like my Mr. T, my director was spying on us. Which is within the rights of managers to listen to the work the staff is doing. . .I was just surprised he did it.

He did not even want an answer. He just told us that we both f'ed up, and that we both are shit and both are not working as a team. And he was partly right.

Weeks went by and I tried to not piss off Mr. T. One day I was on the shop floor in area Delta, which was a secured area for certain jobs. Out of the blue, Mr. T called me. For some reason Mr T. flipped out. I tried to remain calm. After the phone call, I talked to my manager and said Mr. T yelled at me. That may not have been a good idea. A few minutes later, MR. T and my manager called me back.

"Uhhh hey Rod, this is Michael. Did you say that Mr. T yelled at you?" said my manager.

"Umm welll" I got cutoff from Mr. T.

"I did not yell!" he said loud. It seemed like he was yelling the fact that he did not yell.

"Umm are we arguing about someone's tone of voice?" I asked. It was a bit challenging to a manager, but I felt confident. Yet, that was it. Mr. T blew up.

"Leave the building NOW!!!!" said Mr. T. Oh wow. . . .umm the boss, he just told me to not only leave the delta area, but to leave the building! Like I was fired!

Our crazy phone conversation was history and eventually the Commando actually said sorry in a odd way. Odd in that he did not say the word sorry, he just said it was a mistake. Haha, that is a easy way on your ego not to sound like you actually made a serious mistake and you are sorry about it. Time went by and a few weeks later I got called into Mr. Ts office. Mr. T started harassing me in subtle ways.

"Why do you keep messing with your shirt!?" he said.

A few more stupid questions and I was done. I walked out of his office, slamming the door hard and calling him a shit. I did so very loudly. I yelled at the boss! Then I walked down to the HR office. I had no appointment. I just walked in and complained.

"Me and my boss keep yelling at each other." I told the HR lady while I crept into her office.

The stress of the event had caused me to have a headache. I told the HR lady this much. She sent me home to get some rest. When I came back to work, I was basically told that I had some issues. The issues of the crazy Mr. T were not mentioned. I survived somehow. I survived the encounter with HR and not even a written warning. Yet I know something happened. Fast forward a year later, and that HR lady was now leaving the company. We talked, after we met in the elevator. I respected her for the way she managed that past issue. Not perfect, but decent.

"Have you ever had someone come into your office, just walk in, with a HR issue, like I did?" I asked.

"Ummm not really. Ummmm. . .do you know! Do you realize how close you were to getting fired?" the HR lady asked.

"Yes, of course I knew that I was almost going to be fired, of course I did!" I said quickly in response.

Takeaways

* I tried to help Mr. T in understanding my feelings, by assuming what he needed to know. I tried to read his mind and help him out. In this case, and in most cases, don't read people's minds! Do not jump ahead and try to solve a problem that may not even exist for them.

* Teamwork is essential. You can easily get into trouble at many jobs, from simply appearing that you are not being a team player. Do NOT make it easy for your workplace to label you as a non-team player. Do whatever you can to work the process and be a team player.

* Work the process with HR. If they are near your workplace, make a note of where they people work should you need to pay them a visit. It is much better working with HR in person, if you can. Unfortunately, this is often not possible.

Chapter 3

Mentor me!

There is a saying that most employees leave because they are not happy with their boss. Another saying, often said by the Boss, is that people leave jobs because they no longer have a challenge. If you are not challenged, one technique is to see if you can mentor someone else or become a mentee. You do not always have to ask permission for this. I was an unofficial mentor to a young kid for several years. I would tell him to learn up on this and that, and I would help him with the challenges of his job. I still know this person and speak to him now and then. Being a mentor to someone will often make a difference where that person really will help you and create a bond that allows for great teamwork. Does your company have a mentor program? If not, you may be in the wrong company. Great companies will have some mentoring program going on somewhere. You can always ask someone if there is a mentoring opportunity, like a site leader. You can also do your own mentoring by talking to people who are new and asking them how things are going. . . do they need help. Create a discussion with the person and see if perhaps it leads to a personal mentoring opportunity between you and them. You might just want to keep it private, or if you find it useful, mention the mentoring progress to your manager(s).

Takeaways

- * Volunteer for any mentoring opportunity.

- * Make it a scheduled thing that you look for opportunities to mentor others or get instruction from senior staff. Mark it on your calendar and make it happen every week. The connections you make will be worth the effort!

Chapter 4

'Let us light em up!' - Mike

I recall having an issue at work with my direct supervisor. It was really upsetting me that this guy was acting the way he was. I did not understand the behavior, so I talked to a talk therapist about it. After discussing this matter, I suggested that my only recourse was to take him to HR. And my therapist?

"Let us light em up! Let us get the barbe-que going, some hot fire, let's put that on his ass!" said the therapist. He was basically saying let's get him in trouble because he is an asshole, and he needs to stop.

"I can't believe the people you talk about, thing things I am hearing about that supervisor. They seem to have no training on how to relate to people. WTF!! It is like they are really smart and some technology but do not have a clue on how to work with people." said my therapist.

"I think that I will take him to HR, and yea, I am glad I talked to you and you mentioned that I should. I will do it." I spoke humbly.

"Ok, good luck with that. And as always, it was nice talking to you." The therapist said.

I liked what he said. I agreed, we needed to go to HR and I figured - when you play with fire, you might get burned, but that is ok. I figured; I will get through this with minimal damage. And it will feel good when it is done, just like a nice barbeque on a Sunday evening. And you know what, it did feel good. I took that guy to HR. We worked the problem, worked the process, and things improved at work. I was mostly happy with the result. Did I think my supervisor now disliked me? I did not care. This is the workplace, not high school. If you are a supervisor, you are getting paid for people to hate you. Many would tell you that.

I ended up only staying a month or so at that job, I found a better paying job and just wanted a change.

Takeaways

* You will need encouragement to go to HR. You will need guts to go to HR and try to improve things. Talk to your family members, non-work friends, and elders. Read these stories! You will find the courage you need.

* Remember you are trying to improve your work-place for the next few weeks. This is not forever. Forever does not exist in the workplace. Jobs change, people change, policies change. Remember you are trying to make your living right here, right now, and these issues need fixed. You may find another

job, you may stay at this job for years, but there is always change. And this is something you must do NOW to get through this thing called life.

Chapter 5

Talk talk

The people in this thing called the modern workforce, we talk. We often will work close together with other people. You can talk about work when needed to get the job done. But you can also just talk talk about the weather, about the wife, about your latest adventure - that was mostly illegal and therefore interesting. You can talk about these things, it is your choice to engage or not. Should you? My advice is to try to minimize it. Talk enough just so that you feel comfortable talking to the person. Engage a bit more if you are extremely interested in a topic, a shared interest. Your goal is to chat enough to make it easy to ask the person to help you with a project. That is, it!

There will be many conversations where you will really be tempted to join. . .is it necessary? Ask yourself that.

I recall a life changing conversation between me and a coworker. We started talking about the basics, like:

"how do you feel after that bar hopping?". I would ask.

My peer talked, and then I told my peer about a headache issue I was having. He told me that he solves his hangover headaches by putting his entire head in a sink filled with ice and water.

"I will try that!", I replied.

That technique has saved me from many headaches, it really works for me. It was a huge blessing that I had that conversation and acted on it. To this day, I still use ice packs, I use the ice on my head when I get a headache. I may not have ever tried it, without that simple conversation. So yes, a quick conversation can be life changing.

Takeaways

- * So talk if you must, talk for comfort, but keep in mind you are getting paid to work, not talk.

- * Do not talk about rumors, at all. Rumor spreading is a sure way to get someone pissed off at you. And never share personal information about anyone else.

Chapter 6

The team that is not.

So in our world of imagination, let's go over some bad situations, where team work is almost nonexistent. Where people just do not even try to get along. If you are unfortunate to be working in a place like this, I feel bad for you. We won't solve every problem for you here but let us dive into these horrible places to work. Now one thing you often find in a new job is that there is vocabulary and semantics that you are not familiar with. Often you just learn these on the job and they all start to make sense. But in a horrible job, semantic isolation will happen. You won't just be able to start, you won't be able to being to figure out what things mean, because no one takes the time to explain it. So you become isolated. You cannot interact or let alone assist, because they disenfranchise you.

Let us break down some of the ways this can happen.

1. The team is not. There are many people in the organization not incentivized to make the teamwork.
2. People are trying to ambush you and keep you in the margins. They do not want you to know all the words and terminology, because then you might question the very nature of what they are doing. They want you in the organization but only on the sidelines, filling the water bottles and handing out the band-aids, but they do not want you playing the game.
3. People want to ambush you so that you no longer work in the organization.

Do not let yourself be kept in the dark. There is a tendency to keep your thoughts and questions to yourself. **DO NOT DO IT!** You must be intrusive and ask the questions! You are not incompetent; you are just **NOT INFORMED** on these things. Get informed and you can help. Stay ignorant and you will stay in the sidelines. Do not be the mushroom. Mushrooms grow in the dark, people do not.

Unfortunately, these places are common . . . teams that are weak and not welcoming. They often come with managers that have a history of employee firings or sudden employee termination, often employees quit. The manager at these places was usually never blamed for the people leaving the company. Long ago people would compare managers to airplane pilots. If the plane goes down, the pilot goes down with it. This is not the case. The manager will often never lose. Only the workers lose. The manager at these crap offices and places of business usually just bury their mistakes, by escorting the employee out of the office.

Takeaways

* You will need to assume good intent. You do that until proven otherwise, then you must decide how to deal with that person. Do not assume the organization works this way and that some behavior must be direct malice towards you! If people do not let you know how the organization works, you can easily be convinced that people are out to get you. Do not let it happen! Get informed and have the ignorant

conversation with your boss. Tell the boss you are ignorant of the project and its goals, but you want to know about it so you can help!

* Lack of teamwork does not mean you have to leave. You can help others in your group. If they do not help you, well that is ok. Find out what you need to perform the tasks, get them done by yourself if you need to, and get out at the end of each day satisfied. You got paid and may need to keep doing that, even when no one helps you. You may be working twelve-hour days. It may seem unfair. It maybe wasteful. But if you need the job, you might just have to keep doing the work without the team. I generally advise to not complain about the lack of team-work. Just try to make the teamwork when you have time. Have a bit of fun. Ask people about their personal lives when you have time. One icebreaker is this simple request:

"Name two things about yourself. Make sure one is not true. I will try to figure out which one is true!". This is a bit of fun for both sides, and you learn a bit about the other person.

Eventually maybe you can work together as a team if you can joke about things like this. It is possible! Be happy. Smile. Just because this job sucks, you don't have to be miserable. It is difficult to smile under stress but try it. Use and learn body language to try to communicate in every possible way, using all the assets you have. Learn active listening. Look it up on the internet, it is a thing. You need to be an active listener and nod your head while listening. Control your attitude. I like to think of a man I once met in a wheelchair. He was pretty pissed at the world; I suppose because he was in a wheelchair. No matter what, you do not have to be miserable. That man could not jump, could not run. But he can imagine, and he can believe. He remembers. . .he carries some resentment. He can control it. He can control his attitude, and so can you.

Chapter 7

The answer man.

So you may have a job where everything is great, or so it seems. And every person working seems to be ok, but they have different ways of doing things. So it is a bit unorganized. . .but ok, you need a paycheck. And when you ask the boss, the answer man, he always answers with the good word you want to hear. So the answer from the answer man is always positive, like a yes answer. But there are catches. Here is a typical answer to the question of, can I get a raise?

"Hi there Dave, can I get a raise? I think that I am worth it!" you ask.

"Yes, but we have to wait until a few days, then we can work on the papers, to get that ready." says the boss.

Now this is a bullshit response. It was a weak, yet positive response, but it was probably bullshit, nonetheless. Why was it bullshit? Because the answer comes with baggage. We must do paperwork. This boss is basically telling you that you may never get a raise, and he is not promising anything, nor did he give a date when the raise would happen. it is a bullshit response. You need to be able to see these.

That conversation should have gone like this:

"Hi there Dave, can I get a raise? I think that I am worth it!" you ask.

"Yes!! We should have you getting paid 1.5 percent more, in the next paycheck!" says the boss.

The answer man may be willing to please, but he strings you along. Strings attached! Be aware of these. I have been lucky in this, that I have not spent many working days with this type of organization or group. One of my bosses did seem to try to bullshit me like this. I felt like he was talking to me like a used car salesman would. Used car salesman are often answer men who got laid off or fired and now have to sell used cars for a living. They often talk fast and yet do not make a convincing story.

The boss I had, he was not always positive. He would tell me NO and would tell me that I am doing it wrong. So, he was appearing to try to help and provide guidance. A true Answer Man will be more concerned about giving you a response that seems ok, rather than giving you a response that you can really make sense out of and that gives you helpful advice. I can only fathom a guess at why people stay at such horrible places to work.

Takeaway

* Do not assume your workplace is bad until you know if yourself for a fact. Do not jump to conclusions that this is not the right job or boss for you.

* Your boss, with those crazy answers. Well, it maybe something he was told he must absolutely tell people, or else! His job is on the line, so sometimes people will bend the truth to keep their job. Assume good intent and rationalize this behavior.

Chapter 8

The asshole.

You might find that you are in a job with a asshole boss. Maybe he is rude, unprofessional, and a bit arrogant. This is the story of one such person. In this job, you may find that you really would like something about the boss to change. There are several ways to go about it. The best way is to tell the boss that they are being a pain in the ass. This sounds risky, but it really is not. Most bosses will laugh when you tell them. They know they are an asshole! They may like the feedback that you are telling them. And it will make you feel good. You can mention specific things that would be nice if they did differently.

I had an asshole boss that seemed to be clueless. He was also rude. At some point, I had enough. I wrote an email to him and to HR with some complaints. HR replied and said OK to my complaints.

Takeaways

* Do not be afraid to talk to HR. You have the right. Many bosses will include HR in email regarding your performance problems. You can do the same with your boss. If he is breaking boundaries, you should let HR and the boss know.

Chapter 9

The speed freak

My last two bosses were speed freaks. I call a speed freak anyone who constantly, at a high rate of speed, checks their messages and tries to reply quickly. I usually feel a bit sad for them, that they don't get to spend time with people. Deep conversations get broken up because the boss got a ding on his phone. The boss did not have time to work the issue because he is bombarded by other issues. And it's sad that they can't focus on things for very long, without being interrupted by messages every few minutes. The speed freak boss may not be any trouble for you. They may let you do your job without any issue. But all the speed freak bosses I have had, well they did have management problems. They simply have built a system for themselves that only does focus on a speedy and quick reaction. This behavior is instilled by feedback from customers, and or management above them - that call for quick reactions and answers. If you do not suffer from this behavior, I can almost guarantee your organization will probably suffer from a speed freak boss.

There is a saying about speed, "Speed kills". Often quick judgements and responses can be incorrect and cost the company or its clients. There is another saying about speed and service.

1. Fast service.
2. Quality service.
3. Cheap service.

Pick two of these, we can do them. We cannot do all three!!

When you analyze that, it basically says you can't get everything fast, and cheap, and with quality.

Sometimes you must slow down. You must plan and check the plan again, perhaps even tomorrow. Before you act today. The speed freak boss may have you doing work that you will have to do repeat, wasting time and resources because the plan was not right in the first place. Take time to do the critical thinking, especially when it is critical to do so!

Do not try to speed things up for the speedy Boss. Here is an example.

You send a text:

"Hi, how is it going? Can you pickup my paycheck today instead of tomorrow?", message sent

The boss replies with

"I cannot but let me figure this report out" the boss sends a message.

What was wrong??

You put two thought processes into one text message. My suggestion would be to do it this way:

"Hi, how is it going?" message sent

The boss replies back with

"Doing ok, could be better" the boss sends the message.

"Ok, can you pick up my paycheck today instead of tomorrow?", message sent.

So, you separate each request. Slow it down. The boss must reply to each one. When you cluster messages, you get bad responses. Make each message or request clear.

What else can a speed freak boss do? Often, a speed freak boss will try to simplify the complex. Well, everyone wants things simple, right? Here is what happens. So let us say you have a task. Some logic will get you to the following steps, to do that task. Pick A or pick B:

A. You can read the manual. That is a learning task. Then do the task. That is an execution task.

- or -

B. You can skip reading the manual. Just do the task. That is an execution task.

The speed freak will tell you to go with process B. It is faster, right? Not really. Both step A. and step B. are not correct. Once you go through all the minute details, you end up with a more involved, time-consuming scenario. The speed freak won't want to hear it, but you need to tell the boss, this is what will happen. And these are the choices, in detail:

A. You can read the manual. That is a learning task.

Then you must write the steps or pull the steps out of the manual that you need to do. This is also a learning task.

Then you do the task. That is an execution task.

- or -

B. You can skip reading the manual. Just do the task. You cannot do the task without making mistakes and learning the tool or process. So you will learn by doing the task. That is a learning task.

Only after several repetitions, you will have learned the task well enough to be successful most of the time. The majority of these tasks will now succeed!

You can now write these steps down and do the task. That is an execution task.

The speed killed the process, and the repetition revealed the details. Be aware of the speedy boss doing things like this and making complex tasks seem like they are easy tasks. When, they are not execution tasks. They are a combination of learning and execution tasks.

Takeaways

- * The speed freak boss maybe weak on defined roles. People and or process do not get the attention they deserve. If you like process and procedure, a speed freak boss may not be for you!

- * Being nice and thankful is just as important as being quick to respond. Just because your boss is a freak does not mean you need to speed things up! Take the time to make it right. Most people do NOT like being rushed. Does your client enjoy the way you treated them, with the fast pace? Ask yourself!

- * Expect unfinished business. Usually in a high stress environment where you have a speed freak boss, you will have surprises. I usually like surprises in the workplace. If you do not like surprises, you may need to look elsewhere for employment.

Chapter 10

The dreamers

I have had bosses that dreamed. They would dream that everyone would start doing something different, just because they told us so. This was a fantasy. There was no plan. There was no training. The bosses just mentioned this and assumed people might do as they say. Did I question the dreamers? Not I, I just nodded my head. And I figured this was a pipe dream, and plan with no thought. This does happen, in all sorts of organizations, believe me. People will just imagine things and then with some nice speech, expect people to do it.

Takeaways

1. Let the bosses engage in fantasy, to some extent. If they are asking the entire group to do something, just find out what, if anything, you need to do.
2. Talk to others about the dreams of the leaders. Are they crazy, misinformed, or just dreaming? Get the story if you can and plan any actions you must take.

Chapter 11

The man who cried

I recall that one time as a supervisor, I made a employee cry. This was a person who was not my report, *was just the team leader. But I made the man cry.* I was shocked that this guy suddenly was tearing up and like really shook up from us having what I thought was a simple conversation. My request was simple it seemed, but somehow it really freaked him out. I perhaps hurt his self-esteem. He felt hurt because he thought he did things very well, and I was telling him, not so much. And then he cried. So it happens.

Men usually do not cry at work. This guy did. Perhaps he was going through some tough personal issues. I do not know. This employee was nice, and he had apologized one time for something that was pretty minor. Meaning he went out of his way to make sure I felt ok about a conversation we had. I was happy that he did, and I tried to let him understand that I was joking around a bit. I had told my co-worker that I would throw his phone out the window of my car, because someone said I was on the edge and under stress and perhaps on drugs. I did not like being told that I was possibly on drugs, and that is why I threatened to throw the cell phone out my car window. This was a conversation with a group who knew each other very well. I thought it was not a problem. Well, it was not really a problem. But in hindsight, I guess he saw it as - I was very upset with him. I was not upset, I was just a bit ticked off that he mentioned the possibility of my drug use. So perhaps that conversation put the cry baby guy on the edge, where he thought I was really upset with him and might fire him.

Getting fired is often very fearful and I get that you might cry. That is one reason why I don't think people should ever joke about firing employees. Bad bosses will often joke about such things. It is unnecessary drama to talk about how easy it is to fire someone.

Takeaways

* Be aware of people's stress. You never know what stress a person can be under in a workplace. There are such things as workplace shootings, and they happen often because of people's stress. Make sure you communicate without joking, even though it may be very humorous to do so. If you see extreme stress in a coworker, let them know you see it. And tell them they probably should change their behavior before management ends up seeing the stress. Hopefully your coworker will get the message that they need to be calm at work so that they can do good quality work.

* Be quick to correct people who mention jokingly about getting fired. It is just not necessary to talk about firing people. The conversation can easily be heard the wrong way and you suddenly have someone who does not come to work the next day. He thought he was fired!

Chapter 12

The accommodation

I will admit that sometimes I have a fear of heights. It is not one of those fear of flying in a airplane things. I do not fear the height in a airplane. But I do fear other heights. It is just a fear of certain heights especially if the building or structure is of questionable nature. I basically rationalize myself into fear because of the nature of the situation. Is your fear something you can conquer at this workplace, or should you ask for an accomodation? Often an accomodation will not help. In a small organizations with little formal accomodation structure, they accomodation might lead you out of a job. Meaning that the company does have to keep your accomodation rights, but they do not need to keep paying you for this particular job.

There is another fear I have had, and that is getting called into the boss's office. Now usually this is not a big deal. But in one of my jobs, my boss was a bit random and rude. So just like my fear of some heights, I rationalized that it could be bad. I also had experience with one boss where I did get very upset with the guy and I basically slammed the door on my way and loudly called him an asshole, so very loud that all nearby workers could hear it. So with that, I had experience in this. In dealing with Mr. rude boss, I was perplexed. Also, for the boss, honestly, I was not sure he was honest. I got to the poitn of fearing talking to him, as he lied to me and really made me angry. I did not want that to happen. So, I wrote an email to HR, requesting an accommodation.

What was my accomodation request? My request was for any physical meeting that I would attend, should have a written agenda. I send this to the HR manager, basically saying that I would work better with this accommodation. I got a letter back from the HR lady and said that would be fine.

Chapter 13

The laughing man. And having two jobs at once!

I had a job once where the boss laughed alot. He laughed maybe too much. I noticed it the first day talking to him. It made me think, what is up with the laugh? This boss guys was at least sixty years old and perhaps his gray hair and experience of life had given him a new perspective, to laugh alot? So I went ahead and dismissed the thought that this guy might have a problem with something. Something where he has to make up for some of his problems with a heavy dosage of laughter. Anyway, I signed up for the job, did the large amount of paperwork needed for the government job, and was on my way. There was a lot to learn about the workplace. I took most of it in and had no problems really. On the third week I did something stupid and became locked out in a area of the building. The coworkers heard about it, as I needed their help to get out. And for several reasons, they thought it was funny. A few days later I was invited to lunch with the boss and another new employee. The boss was unprofessional and made a joke of my incident.

Takeaways

If you are at lunch with the boss or coworkers, do not think you can be freer with your speech. You should be very professional with peers and superiors, no matter the location.

Chapter 14

"The best people to work with, why would I leave here!" she said.

I had a job at a logistics company. A lot of dead-end jobs there. A lady at the processing center told me that. She said,

"I have worked here three (3) years. I have the best people to work with, why would I leave here!?"

I was a bit confused. Her job did not look that interesting or exciting, and it appeared like many other jobs at the location.

Takeaways

Just because you have great managers and great coworkers, does NOT mean you have a great job.

It's great to be positive and smile no matter what you are doing. Attitude is everything, right? Yes, it is but do not fool yourself into the belief that your job is awesome.

Chapter 15

There should be a book about how to make an accommodation at the workplace. I might write one someday. Be prepared. In the meantime, watch for accommodation that you request at work. The accommodation may hurt you more than helping you.

Takeaways

* Use the accommodation process if you cannot do something right with any part of your job. In my case, I would not be able to talk to my boss without really stressing out. So, for me, the accommodation of an agenda was helpful.

* Accommodations have legal issues, and they vary by state. By law, the proper process is documented, and employers should follow the process. This is especially true if the accommodation is because of a disability.

Chapter 16.

You will be written up!

The title of this book infers that it will help you get through the process of working with HR. The title of this book does not say it will prevent you from being written up. What am I trying to say here is this. The goal of management is often to justify their own existence. Meaning they are people who, unlike the blue collar worker, actually do not do physical work. Unlike the blue collar worker, the results of their labor are reports, lists, data, and writing. Meaning write-ups. Management will often justify their existence by the number of write ups they give people. The result is that staff gets the impression, that the workplace "Likes writing up people". This is true for many workplaces! No matter how trivial of a issue, often the workplace will write you up. It is almost as if the managers have a quota of how many write ups they give. And no matter what you do, no matter how you present the unfairness and facts of the issue, the write up of your performance will take place.

Often managers are graded on how many warnings and writeups they have given people!! Which is wrong because if a manager is doing their job well, there might be very few warnings or writes ups given. The manager is put in a difficult position of approving the write up even though they know it is trivial or baseless.

So with the fact that you probably will be written up, what can you do? For one, this is the corporations game and make sure you remember that. They made the rules, this game is made so the corporations win. The game is designed to protect the company. Meaning the goal of writeups is also to protect the reputation and the liability of the company from successfully being sued. In many jurisdictions there is a possibility that companies will have to pay court settlements for improper termination of a employee, for example. If the company can write you up, it protects them in a lawsuit. The writeup will show that the employee had performance issues. . . even though baseless and trivial.

Again the managers also have to justify their existence. It is in the companys best interest to write you up. These things may or may not help, but lets go through some steps you might want to take.

1. Talk to other employees about write ups. Find out who has been written up and discuss it with them. This may help you understand that no matter what you do, you may end up losing your fight to be writeup free. The write up will go into your record now matter what you do. Meaning your workplace indeed does love and enjoy and is hooked on writing people up. There is comfort here in that you and others are and will be unfairly treated. . . but it is often a joke. Meaning do not put more time into fighting the writeup than you need.

2. Consider your options. At the point that you are now written up, what next? There maybe discussions that you are now difficult to promote, or that you can no longer transfer to another location. Does this affect your ability to come to work each day? Think of the worst possible outcome. . .you are written up. Will you still be paid the same? Often you will be. Can you live and work after this write up? Usually you can indeed.

There are workplaces, like the US military where a writeup will end up costing you money in the form of pay decrease. But this is not the case with most corporations. So are you ok with coming to work, getting paid the same, and being at peace with that? In most cases you can work just like you have been and continue to get paid, while working on your degree, working on your family, or other personal projects. You can continue doing all the things you have always done, only difference is that you can tell a good story to your friend about the writeup process. You can share your experience and tell your peer that the workplace is unfair. And to keep going. Perhaps you simplify that this company does have its problems and you are ok with it. . . continue doing life.

3. Keep fighting. If you believe its worth the fight to make a change and keep working to fix things at your company, what will you do? Will you work and volunteer to help unionize your organization? How about starting a workplace association to help fellow workers?

You are now written up! NOW FIGHT!

Ok so the words were written on the wall and you did end up getting written up. You can not function well at work without trying to make things better. . .so you are going to fight! Let us get into the fight.

FIGHT!

First step, if you have not done this, is try to appeal the write up. Ask if there is an appeal process. If no appeal process, ask others and why there is no appeal process. Plead with HR or directors or higher up to see how it can be appealed. Ask if you send an appeal in email, will it be considered?

Here is an example appeal email. Here are two (2) different events that led to a writeup and appeal. Here are the appeal examples:

In this example the worker was written up for improper driving and or operation. This appeal tried to focus on the safety issue at hand.

"For the safety issue, I was backing out the PIT during shift startup, as I recall. You might need to check the time? But there was activity happening around me, people passing me. I felt the safest thing to do was to look completely backwards as I put the equipment in reverse. Since there are no other backup cameras or mirrors, how else would you get a good view? So I understand (any A-z company) strict safety policy and agree with that most of the time. But in this instance, you are writing me up for being safe? For me actually trying to really get a good view of my back of the vehicle during a congested time? That makes no sense that this needs to be anything more than a discussion. And now you know, that I have had two (2) discussions with managers about this, I think we can close this case as a learning issue - a learning issue about me trying to be safe."

In this example appeal email the worker was written up for profanity. This appeal tried to focus on the reason for the profanity which most would consider professional.

*"As for the profanity or vulgar words write up. Let me ask you all this question. If you came into work, and stepped on a tack that went through your shoe and about 1/4 inch into the flesh of your foot, you perhaps would say "the shit floor just f***** stabbed me.". And while you are in pain recovering, others would probably be just fine if you persisted to speak some vulgar words at the floor or the tack that is now making you bleed. Agree? So in my case, I was also in pain working at the tape machine. In addition, my pain was ignored and miscommunicated by C*** and A**** somehow, so that Amy never heard that I was in pain, or Amy just ignored my pain. In either case, it was not my fault that management ignored my pain and Amy told me "I am putting you back on the tape machine". This is beyond frustrating when you are in pain, and it's the same pain as when you step on a nail. You want to curse. And I did communicate professionally, I did not confront anyone specifically nor aim profanity at any one specific person. I was professional! In pain but I was professional.*

*I was describing the pain of the machine that it was causing. I have felt so sincere about this that I wrote everyone that I could think may help, I wrote them all so that ****corporate workplace** my try to fix that tape machine, because it caused me an injury and will cause others injuries. The entire setup is wrong. The entire email I sent is here:" **** email redacted for length reasons ****

Other options to FIGHT! Unionize!

Can you create a union or have enough employees that want to join a union? Creating a union will not remove your write up, but will make it harder for future write ups. Unions have been created in almost every industry, including IT jobs. The process can take an extremely long time depending on what type of union you are getting setup.

In closing, there is a hope this book helps you to do your best work. I hope it gives you information and some ideas to make it through the corporate world of work.

Contact me on linked-in by searching for "Rod Deluhery".