

SUPERVISION GONE BAD: 7 DEADLY DEAL BREAKERS

It was an ordinary day in October when the 54 year old senior executive felt a powerful urge to resign his position or risk being fired. He sat at his desk, shaking his head in disbelief. How could so much go wrong in five short months? How could failure of the highest order wind up to be the chief result of big investments made by company and employee? The whole thing resembled watching a movie with other people entangled in complicated situations. Except his scenario didn't involve those other people, those actors. It featured him, a man on the verge of losing his income, his benefits, and his sanity. Fear snaked its way through his innards, leaving a metallic taste in his dry mouth.

Upon reflection, the executive realized that the decline already started before his first day on the new job. His soon-to-be boss left a message on his answering machine, basically accusing him of not providing accurate credentialing information in the pre-employment packet. Rather than simply inquiring about the discrepancy, the supervisor seemed to accuse him of passing on false data. While this should have been a red flag for the executive, he chose to minimize both the content and the tone of that message. In truth, it foreshadowed what lay ahead: seven deadly deal breakers.

① Excessive Control

From the beginning of the relationship the executive observed his boss's intense need to control schedules, work flow, processes, and conversations. The supervisor clearly demonstrated the desire to be in charge, to set the agenda, to have the final say. Compromise or a brand new idea were not options for him. Perhaps he felt threatened by anything other than the status quo, even by the executive himself. Whatever the reason, he regularly stated or implied that things would be done his way. Real teamwork was not part of this picture.

② Resource Resistance

Persons in supervisory roles cannot be expected to know everything all of the time. When they realize they lack technical or process information, however, they need to seek out folks who can fill in those gaps. The supervisor described in this article chooses to minimize his knowledge deficits. Rather than admit them and directly ask for help, he involves other staff in the situation by getting them to do what he can't do himself. As a result, the problem is never solved. The knowledge gaps aren't closed, and the same scenario repeats itself over and over again. By engaging in this behavior, the supervisor fails to teach staff and colleagues the value of resourcefulness.

③ Dishonesty

The boss in this article had been caught in several lies by the executive staffer. In addition, he couldn't or wouldn't examine his skill set objectively. He pretended he had skills he didn't have. Because of this huge blind spot, he ended up wasting people's time as well as inflicting harm on his employees. While he may not have intended to hurt anyone, he did so through his lack of insight into his poor to mediocre abilities as a manager and leader. Capable of lavishly criticizing others for their shortcomings, he refused to shine the limelight on his own. Facing up to the fact that he really disliked supervision would have immersed him in more pain than he wanted to feel.

④ Poor Communication

Supervisors need to know how to give direction and provide process instructions succinctly. When this doesn't happen, confusion and error abound. The aforementioned boss speaks in circles. He lacks clarity about both the content of his communiqués and the desired results. Because he's

fuzzy, everyone else is fuzzy too. This sets up the staff and the organization for failure. There are various specific faces to failure: individual, team, financial, project, strategic plan in general. Supervisors who cannot articulate their expectation and instructions simultaneously cost the company significant money and destroy employee morale. Both are losing situations.

⑤ Lack of Trust

The executive's boss didn't demonstrate trust in his staff. He doubted their technical skills, questioned their judgment, and minimized their opinions. While he'd invite their ideas during meetings, he really didn't want them. In the end, he only valued his own. Thus, discussions became a sham. Staff knew they weren't trusted, even if no one talked about it. They wondered what role they played in the organization apart from technical workhorse. Perhaps the worst consequence was that staff grew to distrust the boss, especially his integrity. That is a serious issue, as employees don't invest themselves in such an environment.

⑥ Motivation Dampers

Constantly giving vibes to staff or actually telling them that they aren't people you want, they don't accomplish enough work, they should be doing tasks they weren't trained to do, and they don't handle things the way the supervisor would handle them are all ways to demotivate employees fast. The bottom line is that staff respond according to the boss's overt and covert messages. Positive, encouraging messages generally yield positive behavior and credible results. Demeaning, critical messages frequently yield undesired behavior and poor work results. The supervisor in this article repeatedly crushes his staff through his words and innuendos. After a while people stop trying to please, because they know they can't.

⑦ Excuses

The boss who expects staff to acknowledge shortcomings but refuses to take responsibility for his own shoots himself in the foot. Making excuses for what he doesn't know, for what he doesn't have, for what he cannot locate, and for what he chooses not to learn reduces his stature in the eyes of staff. The executive cites many examples of this behavior in his previous supervisor.

Yes...previous supervisor. The executive resigned after five months because he couldn't tolerate these deal breakers. He didn't have another job lined up. He didn't know what was next. He just knew he had to disengage from such a lose-lose situation while his sanity was still intact. Continuing to feel the wounds, he faced the source of his pain and chose to cut himself off from it. Thus, he remained the author of his own story.

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get unstuck...create a new story

