At Work: Boss gets upset with employee's stream of success

by Lindsey_Novak

Q: I was hired eight months ago as a supervisor for a small subcontractor of a state-funded, nonprofit agency. I took over for someone who ran the place into the ground, so I knew what problems I would be faced with. Since I took over, our office has been running smoothly, more efficiently than it ever has, and the staff and our clients are happy. For some reason, our contract manager has developed a personal vendetta against me. She has begun micromanaging our entire office, requesting that we copy her on literally everything. She calls various employees to see whether I am in my office, and she criticizes our policies and me to our office staff. I met with her boss (who is at the top of the ladder) about this, but nothing has changed. My contract ends in July, and I know I won't have a job here after that because of her. Should I start looking now, even though I love my job?

A: When things don't make sense regarding a person's behavior, it is usually because that person has a personality disorder or serious personality flaw, and it would be a waste of your energy to try to make sense out of nonsense. She may be severely jealous of you and your success in cleaning things up around the office. She also may be the reason your predecessor did such a poor job. Because the top boss is aware of the problem and not willing to correct the situation â€" a reason many professionals refuse to work at nonprofits â€" you should start a job search now. First, write a recommendation letter that details all of your accomplishments, and then meet with the head boss again. Explain that you love the work and know you have accomplished a lot there but you will not be willing to renew your contract in July because of your direct boss's unprofessional behavior. By turning the tables on them, you will let them know that they can't throw you off track or ruin your reputation. Show the boss the letter, and explain that you would appreciate his or her signing it and that you will continue to do a five-star job until your contract ends. You then will be able to leave on good terms; your direct boss likely will leave you alone because she will feel she has won; and you can interview without having to keep it a secret. Make sure you explain that you hold no grudges but you choose not to work under such conditions. It takes courage to be forthright, but when it's without malice, others will recognize your strength.

Review Potential Outcome Before Firing Longtime Employee

Q: I have a small service business with a long-term employee (10-plus years) who I now realize is inefficient and highly overpaid. I want to fire her, but I'm concerned about disrupting the relationships she has developed with my clients. What should I do?

A: Ten years is a long time for someone to work for a company, so you are wise to analyze the outcome before firing her. Review the depth of her relationship with each client. Then compare her relationships with the clients with your involvements with them. If you have had no contact, get more involved to renew your own relationships. If this employee questions your sudden interest, explain that you feel you should be more active in all aspects of your business. Tell her that you appreciate her dedication to the job but, as a company owner, you should not have thrown all the responsibility on her. As you create a deeper bond with your clients, you will overcome your concern about having to release her from the job. Before firing her, tell her you have no choice but to cut her salary because of these economic times. When you decide to go ahead with firing her, she will understand that your decision is financial, not personal.

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