

Author lists 45 ways we torpedo our careers

by Michael Kinsman

Read a few pages of Anita Bruzzese's book and you probably will see yourself.

And, you're almost guaranteed not to like the picture you see.

"We hear all the time that people aren't happy in their jobs because of the boss, or because of the company, or because of something else," said Bruzzese, author of the book "45 Things You Do That Drive Your Boss Crazy" (Perigee Trade, \$14) "Never once have I heard from someone who blamed their troubles at work on themselves.

"I just got to thinking that can't be right. Some people do create their own problems."

Bruzzese has been writing about the workplace for the past 15 years. During that time, she's interviewed hundreds of workers and hundreds of bosses about what makes a workplace good and what doesn't.

After realizing she never heard one worker blame themselves for career problems, she decided to start compiling reasons some people torpedo themselves.

She found 45 blind spots, the places most of us never look to discover what we have done to wind up in the fix we're in.

Among those might be things as simple as wearing the wrong clothing to work, or being disorganized, or misbehaving at a company party. Others are failing to get to know co-workers, dodging meetings, having questionable personal integrity, asking for a raise you don't deserve or being intolerant of others.

Gripe No. 16 on her list is being a poor listener.

That might not seem like a terrible faux pas, yet it can have a profound impact on your job effectiveness.

"Let's say, for example, that you don't pay much attention when a co-worker tells you about past mistakes

made with a customer," she writes, saying that can lead to you making the same mistake again. The customer is understandably angry.

"He doesn't even bother yelling at you - he goes directly to your boss to complain," she writes. "The boss investigates and finds out you were told of these problems, yet you obviously didn't listen or it wouldn't have happened again."

Suddenly, you are on the hot seat over something that easily could have been avoided.

At first glance, these behaviors seem to be self-evident. Clearly, they aren't always.

"The reaction I've heard from bosses is 'Finally, someone is on our side of this,'" she said. "They're frustrated that workers don't discover these lapses on their own."

"You used to have employees who were with you for 30 years. You trained them, they observed clues to behavior and they knew they had to conform if they wanted to be successful. Now you have employees revolving in and out of the workplace. And, everyone is busy - including bosses - and no one had the inclination to sit down and go over the rules."

Bruzzese freely recognizes that no one is a perfect employee.

"Nobody wants to admit they have flaws," she says. "Everybody wants to pin it on the boss or someone else. I hope that by getting people to see that they make some mistakes themselves that are easily correctable, that they might be happier in their jobs knowing that they have more control over their job satisfaction than they thought."

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