Work Daze: Your friend, the boss

by Bob_Goldman

Hey, congratulations on that big promotion. I always knew you were going to make it to the top. You'll be great in your new position, I'm sure, and all the extra money and perks will make a big difference in your lifestyle.

Wait a minute! You didn't get the promotion. They gave the big job to someone else - someone who just happens to be your best friend in the office. So now your friend is your boss. The person with whom you spent your days gossiping about your lame management team is now "one of them." And guess who's their direct report - you.

Bob Goldman has been an advertising executive at a Fortune 500 company in the San Francisco Bay area.
Now that's a problem. Or is it? According to Peter Handal, the affable chairman, president and chief executive officer of Dale Carnegie Training, having a friend as your boss can be a real advantage. All you have to do is find a positive way to channel your anger, disappointment and jealousy.

Handler admits that the channeling effort is not likely to be easy. (Perhaps that's why he has taken three top positions for himself. As chairman, president and CEO, it's likely that the only person to be promoted over Handler is Handler.

"Promotions can put a strain on personal and profession relationships," Handler says. "But with maturity and a positive attitude it is possible to come out on top."

I agree. With maturity and a positive attitude anything can look good, even the need to report to your pal, the bozo whose greatest accomplishment to date is chugging a six-pack of beer with his boxers on his head.

Still, the situation does demand attention, at least until you can get another job or post those pictures of your friend dancing on the bar of the Kit Kat Klub in a silver lame thong on the company Web site.

Here are some key concepts from the mature and positive folks at Dale Carnegie:

COMMUNICATION

"Having a one-on-one conversation with your new boss is an effective first step," according to the Dale dictum. This may not be easy to accomplish, especially if your ex-friend/new boss reacts negatively to threats of bodily harm popping up in your effort to "determine your new roles and begin to feel comfortable in your new situation." Do try to strike a positive note, however. I suggest saying something supportive, like "Congratulations, pal! Your constant toadying and butt-kissing has finally paid off."

EMBRACE CHANGE

"Do not expect things to stay the same," the experts warn. "Your relationship will be different." Sad but true. Despite the promises that your friendship will remain the same, inside the office and out, it is inevitable that your promoted pal, when he or she starts breathing the rarefied air of Mahogany Row, could demonstrate a change in their self-image. Don't be surprised when your new boss starts issuing memos on parchment, or tries walking on water. You could be offended by the behavior of your new lord and master, or you could encourage these acts of unfettered egotism. The higher they fly, the harder they fall.

LEAN ON A FRIEND

"You may need an outlet for your emotions," Handal intuits. "Discuss the situation with a friend outside the office." Good advice! Bartenders are especially sensitive to this kind of emotional pain and the price of a double Jim Beam with a Dr Pepper back is a lot less than an hour with a shrink. Another excellent ear to bend is that of a Mafia hit man. I'm not recommending you have your new boss capped, but management experts agree, nothing humbles a new manager than a pair of broken kneecaps.

TAKE ADVANTAGE

"If you can get past your own jealousy," Carnegie counsels, "you may have some new political capital at your disposal." This makes a lot of sense. Even if you don't have the useful photos described above, chances are you have learned some potentially damaging secrets in the course of your friendship. Be subtle in presenting these bombshells, lest your new boss misunderstand your positive and admiring support for something else, like blackmail.

"That new Jaguar would make a great company car for me," you could whisper at the staff meeting. "I'm sure if I found an XJ convertible in midnight blue in my parking space tonight I'd completely forget to tell your wife about the three midgets and the Saint Bernard I found in your hotel room at the annual convention."

I'm sure your new boss would make it happen. After all, what are friends for?

Â© Copley News Service

Work Daze: Your friend, the boss by Bob_Goldman