

# Understanding and Dealing with a Difficult Boss

39 SHARES

We've all had one: a difficult boss. The difficult boss is one who sets a negative tone by being unapproachable, overly busy, and emphasizing the wrong things. These managers will likely fail in their duties

(<http://businessdegrees.uab.edu/resources/articles/why-managers-fail-a-look-at-common-misconceptions-in-management/>) at some point because of these traits, but in the meantime, their employees have to deal with them. Instead of simply sighing and going about your business, there are better ways of dealing with a manager who is difficult.

## 1. You Must Look Inward

First and foremost, you should see if the reason your boss is being difficult relates to you being difficult. Your boss may be acting or appearing busy every time you need help because you are constantly seeking help or approval. If you just started your job, that's understandable. If you've been there for nearly a decade, it's probably time to cut the cord.

What if your boss is responding to you with snark, and not the fun kind, and you've noticed that she's not like that with anyone else she manages? Maybe it's your attitude and not hers. If it's just this week, look for ways to adjust your attitude ([http://www.huffingtonpost.com/donna-labermeier/attitude-adjustment-\\_b\\_3983914.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/donna-labermeier/attitude-adjustment-_b_3983914.html)). A more regular occurrence? Then it's time to seek more permanent solutions, like learning to cultivate your emotional intelligence (<http://graduate.norwich.edu/resources-msl/infographics-msl/emotional-intelligence-eq-and-leadership/>) (EQ) in order to better respond to your boss. Well-honed EQ can turn you from the employee your boss loathes into a great leader among your peers.

Try something even more radical. Change your diet. The foods we eat directly affect our health, both physical and mental. It's a circle. Turn it from a vicious one to a virtuous one.

## 2. You Must Try a Little Empathy

This might be hard for us to do when the issue is with our boss. If you've seen your boss treat others the way he treats you, it's probably safe to pin an issue on your boss and not you. That's always the worry when we have difficult interactions with people. We're paranoid it's us not them.

When you've established that your boss is the difficult one, you may have a hard time being empathic, but walking a mile in someone else's proverbial shoes is an effective business tool (<http://www.forbes.com/sites/ashoka/2013/05/30/why-empathy-is-the-force-that-moves-business-forward/>). If you truly do need help, but your boss dismisses you because of yet another meeting, think about this: unless you work for the CEO, your boss has a boss too. Your boss may not be as in control of her schedule as you think she is.

Take a deep breath and be proactive about making time with your boss to speak with her, not talk at her. If you have to schedule time on her calendar, so be it. That will get you started, and then you can tell her how you feel.

## 3. You Should Be the Peacemaker

Don't be a peacekeeper. There's a big difference. Being a peacemaker means being proactive (<https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/being-peacemaker-among-office-politics-matthew-hinman>) in how you deal with people who make life at work difficult, from your boss to the office gossip. Peacekeepers keep to themselves and let the world of work pass

them by; they let others do the dirty work. Office peacemakers don't just make peace between themselves and their difficult bosses. Peacemakers are not afraid of ruffling a few feathers among peers in order to make the culture of the entire office a better place.

There are seven important things a peacemaker does (<http://www.inc.com/chuck-blakeman/successful-people-are-peacemakers-not-peacekeepers.html>) to maintain empathy and a health culture at work. Among those are recognizing that the solution to the problem could benefit the person with the issue. Another is using neutral ground, not the office, to have discussions about an issue. A third is choosing one issue, if there are many, on which to focus a discussion. Peacemaking is often most successful when clarity can be maintained. Muddying the waters is only going to make your boss more difficult.

#### 4. You Must Cut and Run

Sometimes, you can only make so much peace before it's time to get the hell out from under the tyranny of a difficult boss. You can only be so empathetic before it starts to seriously affect your mental health. Not only that, but that manager whose schedule is so busy she can't find time to address your needs? Her lack of focus (<https://hbr.org/2002/02/beware-the-busy-manager>) may well lead to the business's failure. Get out while you can.

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## The Risks and Rewards of Going into Business for Yourself

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No one would deny that starting a new business is fraught with risks (<https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/8066363-he-who-is-afraid-to-lose-is-not-ready-to>), but given the uncertainty involved why is it that the US sees over 500,000 new business starts every year? After launching and running several successful businesses, along with my fair share of duds, I'm confident in my explanation. Despite the potential pitfalls, entrepreneurs launch new ventures because the benefits can be equally if not more significant than the chances that something might go wrong.

Nonetheless, it's up to everyone to decide whether the rewards outweigh the risks of going into business for yourself.

### Risks Associated with Starting a New Venture

Again, there numerous risks associated with starting a business. Here are five of the most common ones to consider before jumping in feet first.

- 1. Long and Erratic Hours.** Whether you're adequately funded and staffed or not, as a new business owner you can expect to put in many more hours than you would at a 9 to 5. In fact, you'll probably work more hours than anyone else in your company and with good reason—entrepreneurs wear many hats. Plus, at the end of the day when all is said and done, as the business owner, the buck stops with you. So, the moment you start your new venture you're signing up for long and often erratic hours.
- 2. Many Ruffled Feathers.** Again, long and unpredictable hours are often commonplace when starting a business. So, as you might imagine the hectic schedules that often come with entering a new venture often leaves little opportunity to cultivate what matters most—relationships. Hence, family and friends can often find themselves on the short end of the stick when you begin your new venture; therefore, it's important to build breaks into your schedule because if you don't force yourself to stop and smell the roses, it won't happen.
- 3. Unforeseen Changes in the Market Environment.** Sometimes as entrepreneurs, we start businesses oblivious to massive shifts that are occurring all around us. Many of which could easily have the potential to negatively impact your new business concern. For example, I've seen so many sink tens of thousands into new storefronts only to be told by local authorities – after the fact – that upcoming zoning laws will require them to make expensive renovations to 'stay within code' or close their doors. Of course, you can sometimes offset these types of scenarios by performing your due diligence.

Nonetheless, there are some changes that you just won't see coming no matter how much planning and preparation you do, which is why you must factor a certain degree of the unknown into all that you do as a business owner.

- 4. Lack of Management Experience.** There is a notion that I've seen among many new entrepreneurs that if they hire good managers, the owner's lack of management experience (<http://businessmentorships.com/entrepreneurs/6-essential-lessons-life-business/>) won't matter. Unfortunately, as many find out this is often not the case because without the requisite experience, how will you be able to identify whether your managers are making mistakes. This inability to distinguish between wise or poor business decisions is why many business experts recommend that entrepreneurs take on management positions for someone else before striking out on their own.
- 5. Potential for Financial Loss.** Running a business requires careful budgeting and financial management. However, the problem with many entrepreneurs is that we tend to start businesses without understanding key management functions, like how to forecast profits and losses or create financial reports.

Our lack of financial know-how is often compounded by the fact that many new businesses start before they've had an opportunity to secure adequate funding. Hence, it's not uncommon to see new business owners scrambling to find odd jobs to make ends meet. One way to avoid severe cash shortages is to set aside six to twelve months of personal expenses before starting your business.

## Rewards of Starting a New Business

While there are vast challenges that come with starting your own business, the rewards can often make up for it.

- 1. The Opportunity to Grow through New Challenges.** One of the best things about being an entrepreneur is that you get to break away from the monotony of punching a clock and doing the same job duties, day in and out. As a business owner, you'll face new challenges and tasks on a regular basis. In fact, it is rare that you'll do the same thing two days in a row! And the best part of performing new activities on a regular basis is that it gives you the opportunity to grow and learn, which will ultimately help you become a better business person.
- 2. You Get to Surround Yourself with Great Folks.** Let's face it, as nice as it is to earn a steady paycheck, a 9 to 5 certainly has its drawbacks. Perhaps chief among them is having to work in an environment, not of your choosing. Doing so means that you have zero say in who you will work alongside. Hence, a common complaint among those who choose to work for someone else is that they can't get along with their supervisor or other co-workers. However, when you're the boss you get to choose the folks that you work with, and if it turns out that you hired someone that's hard to get along with, you have the option of letting them go.
- 3. Chart Your Own Course.** The ability to determine the success or failure of your business is a big draw for many entrepreneurs. In fact, many business owners cite this as their sole reason for going into business. Given that entrepreneurship tends to attract those with a take charge mentality, the business arena is a great place to go if you enjoy making weighty decisions.
- 4. A Flexible Schedule.** Although we often associate entrepreneurship with long and unpredictable hours, there is another side to it. Running a new business sometimes gives you more flexibility than you'd have as a full-time employee. For example, many business owners have more time to travel and participate in volunteer than full-timers.
- 5. Financial Potential.** There are many different motivations for doing one thing or another. For instance, some are motivated by helping others, while others find motivation in facing new challenges. But whatever helps you wake up in the morning, it's difficult to overlook the hefty financial rewards that could await those who can successfully manage business risks. As a business owner, you're usually only one deal away from reaping huge financial dividends.

There you have it, the most common risks and rewards of starting a business. Learn how to mitigate them, and you'll be well on your way to big things in the business arena. Here's to entrepreneurial success!