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April 2014

## Keeping Up With Dr. Steve



[Link to my website.](#)

**I'm quoted in this Wall Street Journal piece on workplace violence!**

[Link to article.](#)

### **This Month's Clever Acronym:**

One of the videos I show in my training programs for both customer service skillbuilding and workplace violence prevention is called "The Difficult Guest." The video is goofy, funny, and to the point: sometimes customers and taxpayers can be difficult and demanding and we need to use certain skills to serve them. When we deal with them when they



### **The Best and Worst Boss You Ever Had: Making Your List**

One way to think about how to be a better leader is to remember who was a good leader for you. One exercise in improving your



leadership skills is to take a pen and make a list of the traits, behaviors, characteristics, and even the eccentricities of the best bosses you ever worked for.

And don't just consider your current or recent bosses for this list; go back through every job you ever held and consider how you were treated, led, taught, praised, disciplined, and communicated to by your direct supervisors. Some supervisors say their best boss was their first one, or their best experience was in a fast-food job, a small agency, or while working for a family-owned or a small business. Of course, this list is not complete until you consider the dark side. If one side of your page contains what was so good about certain bosses, the other side must describe the truly horrible bosses you worked for, and how you survived their alleged leadership skills.

When I use this Best Boss-Worst Boss exercise in the new supervisor classes I teach, I get a range of interesting replies. On the Best Boss list, the

are angry, it helps to remember this LAST thing.

**Listen to them.**

**Apologize for mistakes.**

**Solve their problem.**

**Thank them for their patience.**

participants write traits like, “great listener, mentored me, treated everyone fairly, used lots of praise, kept the group informed about issues, went to bat for us with senior management, gave out assignments fairly, taught me how to do my job better, gave me the freedom to learn and make mistakes, caught me doing things right, and was always available but didn’t micromanage me.” On the Worst Boss list, I often see comments like, “alcoholic, liar, screamer, slept at his desk, sexually or racially harassed me, stole money from me, timed my bathroom breaks, took credit for my ideas, couldn’t or didn’t want to communicate, was never satisfied with my work, never praised me or anyone else, never taught me anything, seemed bothered when I asked questions, didn’t make eye contact with me, threw us down and blamed us in front of senior management, gone all the time, micromanaged me.”

The context of work situations is a part of the comparison as well. What some employees think of as a micromanager might simply be a boss that sets the performance and behavior bars high and demands results. What some employees label past bosses as missing managers, might simply mean that they gave every employee the freedom to do their jobs without too much unnecessary over-the-shoulder scrutiny, thereby expressing confidence in their people.

As you consider the items on your Best Boss – Worst Boss list, ask yourself: “Do my employees ever make their own lists? Do they compare me to the best boss or the worst boss they ever had in their careers? Do they talk with each other about my leadership style?” The answers are: yes, yes, and only on days that end in the letter “y.” This list-making process can be eye-opening. What are the traits and behaviors you need to do more of and which ones should you stop doing? What are the things that the best bosses in your career did that you want to emulate and which ones from the worst bosses do you want to avoid? When it comes to supervising, leading, and supporting your people,

which list do you want to end up on?

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**Dear Dr. Steve:**

"We have an employee who needs "anger management." Worse yet, he's a manager. What can we do?"



The phrase "anger management" has become a catch-call for a variety of employee behavioral problems. Employees who can't or won't control their anger can cause significant damage to the morale, productivity, and performance in their offices. Anger is often a secondary emotion, meaning that people who lash out at others are often frustrated about other issues in their personal and professional lives as well. The concept of anger management coaching continues to expand.

Hospitals send so-called "disruptive physicians" to anger management coaching, because of their negative impact on patients, staff, and peers. Senior executives need anger management coaching when their outbursts around their teams reach a level where company attorneys or the Board of Directors become concerned. Managers and supervisors can need anger management coaching when employees start to complain to HR or other bosses about how they are mistreated, scared to come to work, and thinking of quitting.

Most trained practitioners in anger management coaching focus on five key areas, using one or two meetings per week with the coachee. These include: anger triggers, communication skills, stress management, social intelligence, and impact awareness.

I typically start by asking the person to fill out a self-

assessment instrument, like my dad's Mindex or the DBM tool, I-SPEAK Your Language. I give the coachee a workbook and ask that he or she complete homework assignments prior to the next meeting. Failure to do the homework or not participating fully in the sessions are critical signs that the person is not ready or willing to change. I emphasize that the changes need to come from them, to be "new and improved," and not just tell me what they think I want to hear to show compliance.

I believe five sessions is sufficient to give the employee the tools he or she needs to gain control. I also ask them to consider going simultaneously to their Employee Assistance Program (EAP) counselors, pastoral counselors, or personal therapists, to get the clinical support they need in conjunction with what we're doing. True anger mastery starts when coachees recognizes their behavior has been toxic and needs to change immediately or they will continue to see the ill effects: job harm, broken relationships, ruined friendships, and added stress on their mental and physical health.

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