

5 Reasons Your Employees Think You Are a Jerk by Karin Hurt

How to avoid habits that are irritating to others

You don't mean to be a jerk. But chances are, there's at least one habit that drives your team crazy. The tragic truth is, the more foolish you are, the less likely they'll be to tell you. Here are a few common jerky behaviors and how to avoid them.

The Big 5 Jerky Behaviors

1. Kissing up while crushing down

You drop everything to support your boss. You treat her with deep respect, and move mountains to accomplish whatever she asks. The problem is all that responsive urgency leaves your team spinning, stressed and overworked.

How to fix it: Treat your team with the same level of respect you give your boss. Be just as professional and polite. Consider the impacts before making commitments. Check in frequently on employees' workloads and discuss their priorities with them.

2. Caring more about your career than their development

Nothing's more aggravating than a boss who thinks it's all about them. Don't be the jerk who puts their career above all else. Your staff wants a boss who cares about them and the work they are doing.

How to fix it: Take time to understand your employees' career aspirations and invest deeply in each person. Develop a deep bench and cross-train so you don't feel the urge to hold onto your MVPs. Set goals for how many people you want to promote each year. Take those goals as seriously as your other targets.

3. Wasting their time

It's not fair to think that your time is more valuable than your team's. Fuzzy vision and disorganized meetings have huge opportunity costs.

How to fix it: Don't make your staff wait for you or hold too many meetings. Keep to-do lists for each person on your team, and bring them several items at once, rather than distracting them each time you have a new task. Ask your team for feedback on how you can save them time.

4. Ignoring their input

Your employees are one step closer to the customer than you. They've got big ideas and want to share them. Jerky bosses think they know better.

How to fix it: If you're not going to listen to their input, don't ask. If you want respect, respect their ideas. Slow down enough to be persuaded. Teach your team how to sell you their ideas.

5. Being moody

Stress is contagious, particularly when the boss is the carrier. Understand your moods and work to release them somewhere other than on your team. Real leaders stay collected even during the toughest and most exciting times.

How to fix it: Notice your patterns and what sets you off. Find other ways to release your stress (meditation, yoga, exercise, prayer). Encourage your team to give you a sign when the intensity is too much. Make it easy for your team to talk with you about how you make them feel. Many employees save their discretionary effort for people they respect.