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## How to Fix Your Boss

Who's really the problem? The boss or the employee?

[John Hoover](#) | Nov 2014 5:00AM



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The Office's Michael Scott: a boss worth fixing?

"How to Fix Your Boss"--there is enough presumption in that title to choke a horse. "Fixing the boss" assumes that the boss is the problem. As a recovering Idiot Boss (*iBoss*), I confess that I have been the idiot husband, the idiot teacher, the idiot student, the idiot boss, and--yes--the *idiot employee*.

I've been an equal-opportunity aggravation to more people than I care to count. So I hesitate to throw stones at bosses until they are proven guilty. But in western civilization, bosses are assumed to be guilty until proven innocent--so stones tend to fly with every boss-sighting.

In a culture where we are socialized from early childhood to rebel against authority, it's hard to accept that rebellion is not necessarily the most effective response to not having our expectations met. That's the behavior we tend to most frequently associate with authority figures; they stand between us and the expectation we have for something they never promised us in the first place.

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Michael Scott of NBC's *The Office*: A boss worth fixing?

We Americans have rebellion in our DNA. The United States was born by kicking its mother country out. We grew up listening to our parents complain about their bosses. We were raised on songs like "Take this Job and Shove It" and "I've Been Workin' on the Railroad" (which, if you look it up on Wikipedia, is not the most pleasant story).

We go to movies like *Nine-to-five*, *Office Space*, or *Horrible Bosses*, and munch popcorn while we watch bosses "get what's coming to them," and laugh at their pain. We work all day in offices that we hate, then go home and watch reruns of *The Office*.

After listening to our parents kvetch about their bosses, we go to school and embark on a life-long journey of rebellion which begins with declaring war on our parents, our teachers, and our school administrators. When they won't allow us to stay in school any longer, we finally get jobs and spend the rest of our working lives taking our unresolved adolescent rebellion issues out on the most visible, available, and socially-acceptable target: The Boss.

Just when you thought it was safe to attack anyone and anything with institutional authority and thus invoke your hard-earned iconoclasm (natural hatred for authority), along comes Dr. Hoover saying, "Don't screw up your long-term options." What I mean by "long-term options" is this: the sooner you can stop assuming the boss is the problem, the sooner you might repurpose that anger and become a more nimble, agile, and fluid navigator of complex corporate waters.

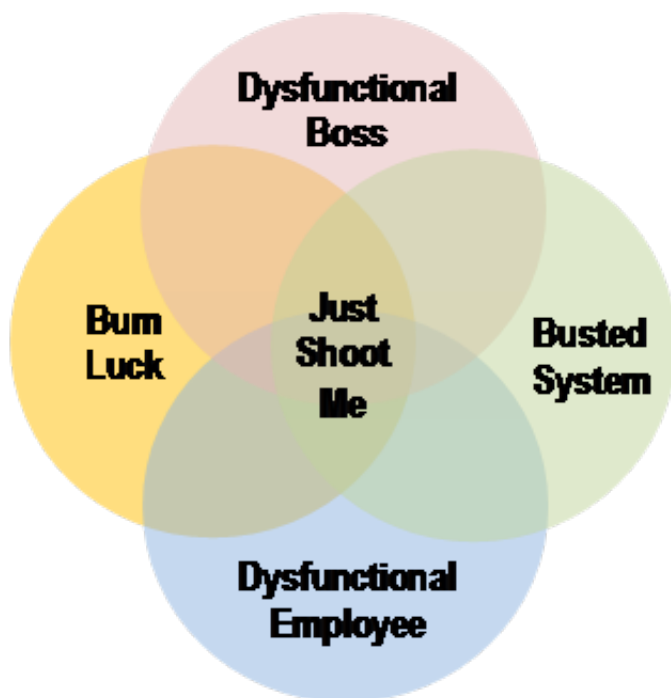
Why would becoming a more nimble, agile, and fluid navigator of complex corporate waters be a good thing? Because while everybody else is bashing their bosses, you could be sailing to the head of the pack, top of the heap, star of the show, penthouse suite. You should want to hit the executive floor eventually, and be granted all of that executive authority--if, for no other reason, so you can be a good and gracious boss who bestows good things on the employee population.

You'll never become Glenda the Good Witch of the office by boss-bashing. And never forget that the one thing all the bad bosses you ever had have in common...is *you*. So ask yourself: Am I truly a victim of my boss's cluelessness, or am I a volunteer?

In any dysfunctional workplace relationship, there are at least four factors in play. (Okay, there are more likely a million, but we'll just deal with four.) We'll assume because you chose to read this article that your boss faces some issues vis-à-vis being an effective leader. That, as they say in Vegas, is a "safe bet." That means that some part of the problem is your boss.

But if you stop there, you're missing a big piece of the truth--and therefore, any possible solution to the real problem: *How to fix the problem you are having with your boss*. To some degree, you are part of this problem. Again, do your own math, but don't give yourself a hall pass and expect to come up with a real solution.

Then consider circumstances and systems. Your luck may have gone south for the winter, and/or the whole system you're operating in might be broken; both of which will make it look like your boss is just unbearable. But before you reach for your boss bat, try this formula:



Subtract the Dysfunctional Employee (you) from the Dysfunctional Boss Factor. From that number,

subtract the sum of the Bum Luck Factor and the Busted System Factor. How bad does it look now?

I don't know what values you ascribed to the four primary factors, but the mathematical result should mitigate your anti-authority emotional coefficient to some degree. If everything is equally bad, you might be caught in the perfect storm where the poison pill is your only hope.

Doesn't that sound silly? Really? Before you approach every workplace relationship with the assumption that the boss needs to be fixed, which will poison your working environment, make it a mutual-sum game. If the total score is 100, how many numbers are in each of the four circles?

**Chart:** John Hoover

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The last boss I had was a greedy pig. He was owner of a construction company. Then his spoiled son came to work there. No ethics or morals!

Wednesday at 8:59 AM



**nikoman1**

+1

What this article fails to address is the fact that most "bosses" rarely raise to their supervisory positions by doing the tasks they are supervising. Most bosses couldn't

cover for their employees position if they tried. This leads to frustration in communication. Most bosses now are impudent, lame ducks which makes it difficult for their charges to respect, make necessary changes and evolve their own and their charges positions. After years of doing just what this article suggests, I found that I have done nothing but make my boss look good and reaped few benefits from doing so. I no longer have that mindset and have become just what was expected of my position and force my boss to make his own decisions.

Wednesday at 7:04 AM

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