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## Press Release:

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#### How to Handle a Difficult Boss situation

**Issue:** Bad boss in a family business.

**The scenario:** Boss has little management experience. He's abrasive, unfocused, and generally a disaster. But his uncle owns the company. Is there an alternative to just leaving the company?

**Coach:** Harvey Smith

There are several things going against you: 1) You're working with someone with questionable leadership skills 2) This may be a dysfunctional family business 3) It isn't your family!

Family dynamics can sometimes complicate the business environment, especially when relatives do not "play well with other." Your boss may be overwhelmed or insecure in his position. It's also possible that he is unaware of how his actions affect those around him.

If you were my client, I'd ask more about your boss' behavior. Does he conflict with others or is it just between the two of you? Has his management style contributed to employee turnover? Is the uncle/owner aware of his nephew's behavior, but looks the other way?

Many corporations and coaches utilize "learning assessments" to understand behavioral styles in the workplace. Assessments are used to build open communication by teaching employees each other's natural work styles. The same principles apply here. You and your boss might be in conflict simply because you two approach things differently. By tweaking the way you communicate with him, you might be able to create a more satisfying work experience.

From the behavior you describe—and I have coached clients in similar situations—your boss has a dominant style. While this type of person has some positive traits, the bulldozer-like style can alienate people by communicating impatiently and in broad strokes. Under stress, these negative traits become more exaggerated.

From what you have written, you are probably one of the other main behavioral styles: influencing, compliant or supportive. Once we understand our own behavioral style, we can use it to become more effective with others.

- I suggest that you aim for these communication traits with your boss:
- Confidence: Be confident when working with your boss—not pushing or demanding. Help him be confident in you.
- Objectivity: If you disagree, disagree with the facts and not the person. Stick to business.
- Simplicity: Don't be wordy. The best approach is to ask him questions in bullet points.
- Provide the "win". He has a need to win, and you can win, too.

Ultimately it's up to you to handle your negative emotions about your boss' actions to avoid self-defeating behavior. The only behavior you can control is yours. Unless your boss has a reason to change, he probably won't. If you leave, there is always the change of encountering someone like him elsewhere. By honing your ability to deal with difficult people, it will serve you well wherever you go

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