

The CEO Advantage: How to Avoid Getting Fired

By Nancy MacKay, Ph.D

CEO challenge:

A 58-year-old CEO had been in his current job for three years, the first two of which were the best of his career. He ran the highest performing national division of his global company and he loved his team. His entrepreneurial style was appreciated as was his tremendous success in turnarounds.

But the last year had been a grind. A new boss of the global divisions was now in charge, and the CEO couldn't stand him. He was bureaucratic and a micromanager. He refused to provide resources to grow the business and didn't support the CEO's ideas and initiative.

Unbelievably, this fellow's communications skills were almost non-existent. In addition to not treating people with respect, he didn't listen. He was killing trust and candour amongst all his new reports, including our demoralized CEO.

CEO mistake: Now it became a chore to come into work every day. The CEO was in constant conflict with his new boss, calling him on all of the things he was doing wrong. As a result, the CEO lost all motivation to deliver results. Part of that was due to a growing lack of interest, but there was a side of him that just wanted to get back at this jerk.

Big mistake. By letting his ego play the blame game with the new boss while at the same time neglecting his responsibilities, the CEO had put himself in dangerous territory. He might have been surprised to find out he was about to get fired.

CEO solution:

It will never serve you well to get into regular conflict with your boss, or anyone in a power position for that matter. You will never win, and being fired is not something you want on your resumé.

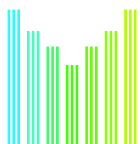
When you find yourself in a situation where all you can do is focus on all of the things you can't stand about your boss, you have three options.

First, you can stay stuck. You can let your ego get in the way, convince yourself that you are the victim and then continue to complain and push back. After all, if it hadn't been for the new guy, everything would have been great.

Alternatively, you can park your ego and rebuild the relationship. You'll need to let go of the past and commit to moving forward. Apologize for what you've done to contribute to the discord and, if necessary, reach out to a third party to help rebuild the relationship.

The final option is to simply get out. Perhaps life is too short to be working closely with someone who isn't a fit.

In this case, the CEO chose to get out because he did not believe it would be possible to rebuild the relationship with the new boss. He developed a 90-day action plan to find another opportunity for work in an environment that was a better fit for him.



If you want to avoid getting fired, you need to stay away from the first option. The other two are far more empowering ways to enjoy your career. •

Nancy MacKay is the president of MacKay & Associates (www.mackayandassociates.ca) and co-author of the book *The Talent Advantage: How to Attract and Retain the Best and the Brightest* (with Alan Weiss).

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