

10 Things Your Boss Won't Tell You

Find out what your superior thinks about your office behavior, attire and more

By Kimberly Fusaro, Posted January 10, 2011

Ever wonder what's going through your boss's head when he greets you in the elevator? Since putting the company president in the hot seat is never a good idea, we went ahead and did the asking on your behalf. Below, nine higher-ups weigh in on everything from what makes an employee valuable to what you may unwittingly be doing to jeopardize your job. Follow these bigwigs' tips and you just might find yourself climbing the next rung of the corporate ladder.

1. What you do outside of work matters.

Your boss doesn't watch your every move—unless you give her reason to—but she is keeping tabs on you. Ask yourself, “Would I want my boss to read this?” every time you post something on Facebook or any another social media site, suggests Edith Onderick-Harvey, president of [Factor In Talent](#), an Andover, Massachusetts-based corporate consulting firm. “Be careful about how much you share about your weekend or what a jerk [you think] your coworker is,” she urges. Otherwise, your boss may start seeing you in a less-than-professional light, and that could carry over to how she values you as an employee.



2. Your attitude is as important as your assignments.

Like 'em or not, office politics matter—both day to day, and in the long run. “What your manager won't tell you is that what may be even more important than completing tasks and following directions is your ability to work with her and your coworkers,” says Onderick-Harvey. Even if you're getting the job done, if your coworkers find you to be abrasive, rude or just unpleasant, it will be hard for your boss to promote you.

3. Speak up!

Don't be afraid to make yourself heard. The most valuable employees take initiative, says Patty Briguglio, president of [MMI Public Relations](#) in Raleigh, North Carolina. “I like having an employee who isn't afraid to show her personality,” she says. “I don't want someone to just fill a spot at a desk.” If you want a promotion, ask for it, says Briguglio. Also, let your boss know what you need to succeed, urges workplace consultant [Steve Langerud](#), director of professional opportunities at DePauw University, whether it's training, time or money.

4. Follow our lead.

If you're not sure whether your boss prefers to communicate in a meeting or via email or phone, *ask*, suggests career and executive coach [Lauren Mackler](#). Also ask what she

wants to be consulted on and what she prefers you handle on your own. And take cues from her personality, says Mackler: If your boss is introverted, don't keep pushing for face-to-face time.

5. Toot your own horn.

Your boss can't possibly keep tabs on what every employee is doing every day—it's up to you to let him know! "When you wrap up a project, send a congratulatory email to your team and CC your boss," suggests Mackler. You might also send him a monthly overview of the projects you've completed and other accomplishments, and have these month-to-month emails on hand at your annual performance review. And speaking of performance reviews...

6. We don't like performance reviews, either!

"They're just as painful for your boss as they are for you," says Daniel Debow, co-CEO of [Rypple](#), a web-based feedback tool. "But you can help make them easier." Rather than trying to recall the details of a project from 10 months ago on the day of your review, keep track of your successes as they happen, suggests Debow. You should also try to connect with your boss regularly throughout the year—not *just* on review day.

7. Dress like you mean business.

"Dress every day as though it's possible you'll be called into the company president's office for a meeting," urges former business manager Sue Thompson, a consultant and speaker with [Set Free Life Seminars](#). Even though your manager has more important things to focus on than your clothes and your business etiquette, if you fall short in either category you're just asking *not* to be promoted—and you may be on the verge of a very uncomfortable conversation.

8. We appreciate positive feedback, too.

If you make your boss look and feel good, you'll reap the rewards, promises Stefanie Smith, head of executive consulting and coaching firm [Stratex](#). Generally your boss is the one doing the encouraging and nurturing, but you can turn the tables to your advantage. Compliment your boss in front of other people, suggests Smith. Just be sure to keep your kind words sincere—and brief.

9. Be a problem solver.

"Most employees bring up problems and expect the boss to solve them," laments Jennifer Prosek, CEO of consulting firm [CJP Communications](#). "The employees who stand out are a part of the solution." If you're struggling with a project or a client and aren't sure what to do next, present your boss with three possible options. Even if she instructs you to do something entirely different, she'll appreciate that you're thinking ahead.

10. Take responsibility for your actions.

Whether you're running late ("The traffic was terrible!") or botched a big time project ("Well, *she* sent the email late!"), don't try to push the blame elsewhere. Instead, acknowledge your mistake and take care not to repeat it. "Even if you're a nice person with decent skills, I can't promote you if you refuse to accept the blame when you mess up," says [Deborah Becker](#), the owner of a State Farm Insurance agency in Eau Claire, Wisconsin. And when you make a mistake, keep your apology concise. "The phrase 'I'm sorry. It won't happen again,' goes a long way."