



Career Bliss
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It can feel incredibly jarring when a colleague presents your idea as his own. But there are some concrete steps you can take to stand up for yourself, ensure your effort goes unappreciated and promote a happier work environment.

We spoke with a few workplace conflict experts on the best ways to handle this uncomfortable situation. Here it is:

1. Speak Up and Elaborate on Your Idea

If you pitched a great project idea and Susan presented it as her own, you can ensure that you get credit by elaborating on ideas, insights and results. Don't bow out and let her take over.

Stay involved. After all, if it's your idea, you know the project best. Field questions that the higher ups might have.

"When it comes to credit for work product, past behavior predicts future behavior," says Steve Langerud, career counselor and executive consultant. "Good production just keeps coming. Statistically, one good work product is truly not significant."

2. You Must be Pretty Awesome—After All, Imitation is the Sincerest Form of Flattery

Your idea was so great that someone else wanted in on it so badly they would resort to immoral means...that's pretty impressive.

Use this as fuel for your self-confidence. Unlike the idea thief in your office, you are entirely self-reliant on producing top-notch ideas and results.

3. Remember Not to be Too Stingy with Credit

When it comes to collaborating on ideas with your colleagues, there's a fine line between excessive score keeping and standing up for yourself against idea thieves.

If you work in a team, it's especially important not to keep score for each and every idea you contribute. Unless a colleague hijacks a major contribution that can be harmful to you (like not getting a raise), consider being generous with your ideas.

Steve Langerud, career counselor and executive consultant, goes as far as to suggest that you literally tell them they can take credit for your idea. Here's what's important: There should be a clear understanding about who gets the credit. Langerud suggests you be generous in a team by consistently saying, "you can have all the credit" and mean it" and "practice asking people to promise they won't share where the idea was produced."

Think of it like a long-term investment in establishing your strong value to the team.

4. Be a Great Role Model

"The best way to make sure [coworkers] don't take credit is to be a good role model in giving credit where credit is due," says Lisa Quast, founder of Career Woman Inc. and blogger at Forbes.

Quast makes the excellent point: You don't necessarily need a manager title to shed light on your coworkers' achievements.

Approach him with as much kindness and compassion as you can, she advises. Confronting him too aggressively could backfire with immediate defensiveness or denial.

In your next team meeting, speak up and recognize someone who really went above and beyond in their work. "Because if you start doing it, it's like a snowball effect then other people," Quast says.

5. If the Problem Escalates, Address the Issue Sooner Rather Than Later

If you've been through No. 1-4 and still feel like your colleague's usurping a huge project for which you deserve credit, address the issue sooner rather than later. The fresher it is on his mind, the easier it is to chisel away at the problem. Connect the incident with their behavior, Quast says.

However, if weeks or even months have gone by, you can still bring it up—but do so in a lowkey way.

"Grab a coffee with him and as you're chatting, casually mention: 'You know I know I should have brought this up a while ago, but it's gnawing at me,'" Quast suggests. Then, bring it up gently.





To avoid coming off too aggressively, never bring in other people into the conversation, and stick to explaining how you feel. End it by asking: *Maybe I'm missing something? Is this what you meant?* This way, he has a chance to offer his side of the story.

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Career Woman, Inc.