HOW TO GET YOURSELF FIRED FROM A NEW JOB

By: Lisa Quast

I have a tendency to write about the *positive* aspects of career development and the proactive things people can do to maximize their potential at work. But sometimes, it's important to highlight the don'ts – things you should avoid doing, or you just might get yourself fired from your new job.

Reader (content shortened): I started a new admin job a few months ago. I'm highly experienced, educated and advanced in the use of many applications. I am also good at problem solving, so I proposed an idea in writing with video to my boss on correcting an issue I saw occurring in the office. I thought my boss was supportive of my idea, but when the office manager found out, she went ballistic on me and called me a "know it all." Over the next few weeks, the office manager made comments saying that I was "confrontational, condescending, rude and disrespectful." We argued. Needless to say, I am no longer working there because my boss said there was nothing he could do [to save my job]. I still feel that the office manager's calling me a "know it all" was very antagonistic and unprofessional and that she acted like an obnoxious child.

Lisa's Comments: Sometimes, it's not what you say but how you say it that makes the difference. By not involving the office manager in the discussion about her suggestion, this new employee likely alienated the office manager and made her feel like the new employee was going around or above her.

Being the new person in an office can bring a fresh pair of eyes to see situations or problems that others do not; however, it's rarely a good idea to propose solutions to issues before working there long enough to understand the company culture, the politics and the people.

Here are behaviors to *avoid*, when you're new to a job:

Don't bother learning the company culture. Every company has a certain culture with various norms, beliefs, values and attitudes. If you don't take the time to understand the company culture, you won't be able to determine the best way to pitch new ideas or solutions to problems. You might even take your ideas to the wrong person, as the new employee, above, found out.

Don't try to understand company politics. Every company also has its own level of politics. Company politics are usually about power. Understanding how power is measured and who has the most power can help you better understand how and why things get done at your company. In the new employee's example, the office manager wielded much more power than the employee realized. Had she taken her idea to the office manager and involved her in the creation of a solution, the new employee's job outcome might have been different.

Question the way (and why) things are done. No one likes an arrogant know-it-all; so before espousing your opinions in your new job, take the time to identify all angles of a situation. Once you have this information, you can dig deeper by using terminology such as, *"Help me understand how..."* or *"How does department ABC then use our information to...?"* and avoid comments such as, *"Where I came from, this is how we did it and it worked much better."*

Bottom Line: How you word things is just as important as the questions you ask, so think before you speak. When you're a new employee, be inquisitive, but be humble in your approach. Be confident, but without arrogance.

~ *Lisa Quast,* author of the book, Secrets of a Hiring Manager Turned Career Coach: A Foolproof Guide to Getting the Job You Want. *Every* Time.   Join me on Twitter @careerwomaninc

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