

# Spot a toxic manager before you accept the job

Wednesday, June 17th, 2015

Anja van den Berg

We've all heard stories about the nightmare of working for a **toxic boss**. Some of us have even had the unpleasant experience of working under a venomous superior.

Everyone suffers under a bad manager – morale sinks, productivity decreases, absences often rise. According to **Patty Azzarello**, business advisor and CEO of Azzarello Group, even those above a bad manager in the corporate hierarchy feel the impact: executives must dedicate time to resolving conflicts and frequently end up assuming the role of and responsibility for those who are not doing their job well.

Your manager's preferred style of supervising is a significant predictor of your experience at work. If your boss treats you unfairly, dismisses your potential or doesn't acknowledge your accomplishments, your work – and your career – will no doubt suffer. Even your health is at risk. **Multiple studies** have found that working for a bad boss increases your chance of having a heart attack by as much as 50%.

Red lights for toxic behaviour and a negative management style often appear as early as during the interview. What are the warning signs that you have to look out for to avoid pitfalls associated with a toxic manager?

Lisa Quast (career coach, business consultant and contributor on **Forbes.com**) and Margot Carmichael Lester (**Monster.com** contributing writer), recommend that you consider the following scenarios during the interview as key indicators to caution:

## **They're late for the job interview**

Everyone has a busy schedule, but toxic managers won't really bother to apologise for how their timetable is influencing yours. Underlining this disregard for your time, they also often do not return emails or phone calls, nor do they acknowledge the fact that they did not follow up as promised. As the interview unfolds, they are frequently not focused during the discussion: look out for red lights such as checking email, texting and discussing topics not related to the interview with other panel members.

## **Their office is unusually disorganised**

If there are sticky notes all over the computer screen, stacks of paperwork all over the office and a coffee-stained carpet to top it all off, there is a good chance that this disorganisation will spill over into how he or she manages people and his or her department.

## **They ask illegal questions during your interview**

Toxic managers frequently don't play by the rules. They consider it their right to disregard policies in order to drive their own agendas. Does the hiring manager ask questions about how many children you have or whether you plan to have any? Does he or she ask about your religion or your age? Hiring managers are not supposed to ask questions about faith, gender, age, marital status or sexual orientation.



**They keep changing the topic of conversation to talk about themselves**

Managers who have an excessive sense of self-importance and who are extremely preoccupied with talking about themselves, are also often the bosses most likely to steal your ideas and take credit for your work by explaining it as a “joint effort”. If his or her ideas seem to be more important than finding out about yours, or if you provide an answer and the interviewer tells you you’re wrong or interrupts with his own answer to the question, it may be an indication that he will be difficult to work with.

**They cannot clearly communicate what it will take for you to be successful in the position**

If the hiring manager cannot clearly articulate the vision, goals and objectives for his or her department, then he or she shouldn’t be in that post. In actual fact, the hiring manager should know what it takes to be successful in every job within the department. This includes the knowledge, skills, background, education and attitude necessary. If he or she does not know this, why is he or she the department manager?

**Other employees avoid the hiring manager**

Your powers of observation can be critical when scoping out a potential new job. Do some detective work before and after the interview – initiate a casual talk with the receptionist or with an employee you meet at the coffee station. What do they like about the company, the department and the hiring manager? As you walk down the hallway to the manager’s office or conference room for your interview, be aware of how employees react to the manager. Are they friendly and positive toward him? Or do they quickly turn around to avoid being seen?

Bad bosses contaminate the workplace. Some do so obliviously, while others smugly manipulate their employees, using them as instruments for their own success. Regardless of their methods, bad bosses cause irreparable damage to their companies and employees by hindering performance and creating unnecessary stress. Spot the signs early and avoid making the wrong career choice.

**Sources:**

[How To Spot A Bad Boss — Before You Accept The Job Offer](#)

[10 Warning Signs of a Toxic Boss at the Interview](#)

[3 Ways to Spot a Bad Boss Before You Take the Job](#)

[How to Spot A Bad Boss During A Job Interview](#)

[15 Ways To Identify Bad Leaders](#)

[Having a Bad Boss Is Bad for the Heart:](#)

[Study Shows Working for an Incompetent Boss Can Raise Risk of Heart Disease](#)

