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# Are You A "Ghost Boss"? 4 Bad Boss Bloopers--And How To Fix Them

If you're hiding in your office or becoming aware that no one is able to look you in the eyes, it's time to look in the mirror.

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They say that people join companies but leave managers.

If it seems like a lot of your people are walking out the door, you might want to study your behavior for some clues, and what you can do about it. In most cases, "I don't consider bad bosses bad people," says Dr. Noelle Nelson, author of the new book, [Got a Bad Boss?](#) "These are traits we all have, but bad bosses accentuate them or rely on them," she says.

And since a boss's behavior affects others a great deal, that can be a problem. Here are some signs you might be pushing your team members into updating their LinkedIn profiles.

**It's never your fault.** "You're going to have some bloopers. Everybody does," says Nelson.

Sometimes your employees will really screw up. But sometimes you've screwed up, too.

"Blamers are invested in fixing the blame on somebody, anybody, except themselves." The way to fix it? "If you catch yourself wanting to blame someone for something, stop. Think 'I'm going to turn my attention to the problem, that's where my energy belongs.' Worry about whodunnit later." Once the mess is gone--once the client is happy and asking you for a new proposal--the blame will probably seem less important.

**People portray things you've never heard of as your ideas.** That's because they've figured out that you don't value an idea unless it came from you. To be sure, "Often, leaders' ideas are the best," says Nelson. It's when they get exclusive about it that things get problematic. A better mind-set? Try repeating this phrase: "Lots of people have good ideas, among which are mine." If this trait is a problem for you, start small--asking for everyone's ideas on paper, first, rather than in a meeting dynamic where personalities come into play. Publicly recognize a great idea that you didn't come up with. A few episodes of sharing credit go a long way.

**Everyone averts their gaze.** Have you noticed the volume of your voice? Are you a screamer? "Often, screamers are good managers as long as everything's rolling along like they expect," says Nelson. But when something little goes awry, "they go ballistic. Their secret fear is that they're not going to be able to pull it together."

That screaming tendency "makes everybody walk around on pins and needles." Fortunately, this one is pretty easy to recognize--and kick. Learn to excuse yourself, take a deep breath, and then picture a 2-year-old throwing a temper tantrum in the grocery store aisle. When you scream, that's what you look like. Appealing, right? "My general guideline is: Don't take your stuff out on others," says Nelson.

**You find yourself hiding.** Some people are technical wizards, but "they just cringe at the thought of managing people. So what they do is avoid them. That's what I call a ghost boss," says Nelson. If you find yourself thinking, I don't want to have to deal with another employee, you may have that tendency.

In extreme cases, you might want to rethink your job choice. Being a manager is, after all, about managing people. But you can also recognize that managing people is a skill, and like all skills, people can learn it, practice it, and get better at it. Seek out an independent coach or mentor to help you think through management as a problem like any other, with approaches that work in a high probability of cases. Most people like to be given clear instructions. Most people like helpful feedback. Most people like to have their opinions valued. You don't have to be a natural manager to still become a pretty good boss.