

Is there a correct way to give your boss a bad review?

Question: "In addition to doing annual employee reviews, our company requires employees to provide a review of their boss. Since my current manager took over our department a year ago, she has created a very negative environment for everyone. My manager's boss recently sent me an email asking for feedback about her, and I don't know what to do. Is there a correct way to give your boss a bad review?" — *Afraid to Speak Up*

Answer: This is a politically tricky situation, so you must tread carefully. Your goal should be to give an accurate review, not a bad one. Including both positives and negatives will increase your credibility.

First, consider your boss objectively and look for her strengths. Very few people are all good or all bad, so she undoubtedly has some. Discuss those first, and in some detail.

For example: "Beth has excellent critical thinking skills. She is able to effectively critique proposals and identify possible pitfalls. Her analytical ability consistently helps our department produce better results."

When discussing your concerns, phrase them in terms of business issues, not personality traits. Focus on the future, not the past. Make specific, constructive suggestions for improvement.

For example: "Beth could be more effective by giving negative feedback to employees in private. If performance discussions were held in her office, we would feel less embarrassed and have more productive conversations with her."

Finally, don't send your feedback by email. Since email messages can remain on corporate servers for a long time, there's no telling who may see them. Instead, deliver your comments personally in a sealed envelope, along with a written request that they be kept confidential.