

# Over explainer

**Question:** I work with a person who has recently been promoted into the management ranks. My problem is that she over explains the simplest thing. I hate to interact with her because it is time-consuming. How can I handle this situation? Last week, she started to go into a detailed explanation and I cut her off by asking what the answer was. FYI, she isn't the sharpest knife in the drawer. -- *Karin*

## Comments

Karin - When I read your problem, I have the very same one, except this person is not my manager, she is an assistant to me (actually the receptionist who helps me when I am overloaded). I dread having to explain anything to her since she goes on and on. So as a result, I do not give her any of my work and do it myself. I am anxious to hear the responses and suggestions to your plea.

Thank you - Char in Ohio

**Posted by: Char | September 02, 2005 at 11:18 AM**

Karin, try to relay to the manager that you are a quick learner, and that if you ever have a question, you will be sure to ask. This may limit the detailed explanation.

Char, it sounds like your assistant is just looking for positive reinforcement from you. She respects your opinion and is going over every detail, just to make it right. Try giving her a small project, and then follow up with praise for her accomplishments.

**Posted by: Michelle | September 02, 2005 at 11:46 AM**

New managers need time and guidance from others to learn "how to manage." Give this person a little support, patience, and kindness during the transition period as she learns these important new skills. The last sentence in your request for help indicates to me that you might be envious of her promotion. Sometimes the "...not the sharpest knife..." can be quite useful. For instance, a dull knife can be used as a screwdriver when a real one isn't available. Think about your attitude!

**Posted by: Evelyn Madison | September 02, 2005 at 12:11 PM**

Hi Char in Ohio -- I have the exact same problem and I am also looking forward to seeing the responses and suggestions. I find myself avoiding this person because it's impossible to stop her once she gets going and I have noticed others doing the same (e.g., going out by the other door rather than going by her desk.....)

**Posted by: Janne | September 02, 2005 at 01:55 PM**

Perhaps you could schedule a daily time to meet with the manager. Bring with you a list of what you are working on. Remind her that you have limited time to go over that list in the meeting, and limited time to go over what else she may want to add. That may force her to keep on track a bit more. While it is important to give positive feedback and to demonstrate patience, it is also important to be time-efficient. Cutting her off may be necessary at times, but if scheduling limited time forces her to be more efficient, you may not have to cut her off.

**Posted by: Jaime | September 02, 2005 at 04:51 PM**

There are so many different communication styles that we have to expect sometimes to come across someone who is totally the opposite of ourselves - and those totally opposite to us usually manage to annoy us more so than others.

You need to understand that the other person has a different communication style from you. As the admin, I am afraid we are the ones who are expected to make the adjustment. We have one manager who wants only the "big picture" report and another who wants the nitty-gritty details. A preference for working with one over the other is natural but a professional admin is able to adapt to the communication styles and support both in the manner the managers prefer.

Sorry, but you are the one who is going to have to adjust. You can try talking to the manager at some point when she is not assigning a task/going into great detail. She will either appreciate the information and change her way of interacting with you...or she won't. You cannot control her behavior - you can only control your reaction to it.

**Posted by: Sharron | September 03, 2005 at 10:26 AM**

Sharron, I totally agree with you. As admins we need to adjust. She may be simply trying to be courteous to you by explaining everything. You never know, she might remember an experience where she was simply given something to do with no explanation or training and is trying to avoid doing that with you. Now, there is a suggestion I have that has helped me in the past - I simply said "I appreciate the detail in which you give me my work, but it's not necessary. I am a fast learner and I hope that I can prove that to you. Tell me the basics and I hope to show you that that's all I need. Is that alright with you?". See how she takes it. Be kind and soft spoken when you say this. If she's a good manager, you will get a smile and maybe a "great, let's try that". If she gets offended, then you have a problem. You tried and you will need to work with that. I hope this helped, good luck!

**Posted by: Sandy | September 07, 2005 at 03:18 PM**

Quick and simple, tell her there are two types of people -  
When you ask someone for the time, you have someone who will tell you the time and there are those that will tell you how their watch was made! She is the type who will tell you about her watch. Let her know that you are the person who wants to know the time and move on.

**Posted by: Dawn S | September 09, 2005 at 11:48 AM**