

Accused of stealing ideas and brown-nosing

Q. I attended a “lunch and learn” session with our CEO. During the Q&A, I proposed an idea for increasing our market share. The CEO seemed pleased and said he would look into it. Now my co-workers and even my supervisor are accusing me of brown-nosing. Some are even saying I stole their idea, which is false. I’m hurt and upset. What should I do?

A. You need allies—fast. Identify those colleagues and higher-ups who support you and want to see you succeed. They can talk you up and defend your actions. That way, you’re not alone in trying to salvage your reputation.

But the best way to gain allies is to make your department look good. At this point, your best bet is to bend over backward to share the credit if the CEO follows through on your idea. Example: Ask your boss if there’s a way to test-run your idea for the CEO. Then have your boss devise a plan in which everyone chips in and everyone—especially your boss—gets credit if it works. The more you can make yourself a well-liked, indispensable star, the more people will line up in your corner.