

# Is the boss a downer--or is your work just not up to snuff?

**Q:** “For the past five years, I have worked as a reporter for a daily newspaper. I need some advice because my boss seems to be shutting me out. Even though I consider myself a dedicated employee, he does not seem to value my effort or my accomplishments.

“My manager corrects my work in front of others and will sometimes intercept my stories to keep them from being published. He never includes my writing in submissions for national contests. He often talks to me about ‘doing things right’ and has recently taken away some of my responsibilities.

“This man has been with the company for 25 years and seems to control everything. No matter what he does, the publisher backs him all the way. Although I love my work, I’m tired of feeling unappreciated. Do I have to take this kind of treatment?” *Discouraged*

**A:** No, you don’t have to take this treatment. You’re free to leave any time you want. But if your goal is to remain employed, then you would be wise to heed the obvious warning signs in this situation.

Your manager blocks your stories from publication, frequently corrects your work, excludes you from writing competitions and has narrowed the scope of your duties. That all adds up to a big, flashing neon sign that screams “I’m not happy with your job performance!”

So here’s the real question: Are you actually doing the best job you can? If you can’t please this guy despite your best efforts, then you might as well start looking for a kinder, gentler place to work. But before jumping ship, perhaps you should find out if you can meet your manager’s expectations.

Start by asking him to clearly define the areas where you need to improve. Find out exactly what he means by “doing things right.” Then establish some specific development goals and meet with him regularly to assess your progress.

Although your boss certainly doesn’t sound like the ideal manager, he’s been there for a quarter century and is in tight with the publisher. As a result, he has much more leverage than you do. This doesn’t make him right, but it does make you vulnerable.

*Not sure how others perceive your job performance? Here's a way to find out: [How \(and why\) to Ask for Criticism](#).*