The dark side of management

It’s a place you don’t want to enter. And unsurprisingly, many supervisors find themselves there. “There” is the shady side, the underhanded side, the dark side of running the workplace. Whether it’s because of habit, survival or just a case of “I don’t know why I went there,” it’s a place you need to get out of—quickly.

Here are four of those dimly lit, spidery corners of management you need to avoid, lest you damage morale and ultimately, your career:

**The crooked courtroom.** It works like this: Tim tells you the work is becoming too heavy all around and quality is being compromised. You tell him that he probably has a time management problem. Tim’s branded a whiner. A few weeks later, Tonya comes to you with a similar gripe, and you now think you need to hire some kind of office assistant to lighten her load. Tonya is seen to have a legitimate complaint. So it’s not what’s said, it’s who’s saying it. Being fair doesn’t come naturally to many people. But a good boss works toward it.

**The "don’t follow the leader" rabbit hole.** This is the “Do as I say, not as I do” boss. You can come in late, but your employees must be on time (and only you can leave early, too). Why? You’re the boss. And that double standard carries over to mistakes (yours are excusable; your workers’ are not). Employees abhor the kingly power, especially when it comes at their expense.

**The hall of blame.** You make a mistake. Upper management has questions and you need answers. You feel like you’re losing control. What do you do? You blame someone or you blame the system. It’s the go-to remedy to save your own butt. Employees can see right through that finger-pointing charade and it won’t take them long. Own up to your errors. It’s a necessary foundation if you want to build integrity and gain respect.

**The flip flop house.** Unpredictable, unstable and Machiavellian. Those are the three tags you’ll get if you can’t keep your story or decisions straight. Frequent and random shifts in anything leave your employees thinking that you’re manipulative at best, dishonest at worst. True, your changes of heart and mind could be well-intended—an outcropping of your desire to evolve, see things in a different light or just to survive the vicissitudes of a demanding workplace. But employees need to see consistency in the person who holds so much sway over their work-life attitudes.
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