

When the boss wants a say in absolutely everything

Q: “My boss, ‘Karen,’ feels the need to control absolutely everything. She asks me to provide weekly status updates on any project which involves my staff. Recently, she requested a report on how much sick leave employees have used this year.

“Karen also expects everyone to be at work from 8:30 to 5:00, even though my team's activities don't always follow that schedule. If someone attends a meeting that lasts until 6:00 PM, I believe that person should be able to come in an hour late the next morning. However, Karen does not agree.

“In the evening, my employees and I occasionally have to participate in conference calls from home. Karen does not seem to view this as part of the work day, so we receive no consideration for that time. She says this is expected of us as salaried employees.

“Ever since Karen promoted me last year, I have been so frustrated that I can hardly stand it. How can I work with this obsessive woman?”

A: Ideally, Karen should have included a discussion of her leadership style in your orientation to this new position. If your previous boss was very flexible and accommodating, then her more structured approach is undoubtedly a difficult adjustment.

In reality, however, Karen is not doing anything wrong. Requesting project updates, checking sick leave usage, and enforcing standard work hours are all appropriate management tasks. The amount of attention paid to these matters largely depends on the individual manager's work style and personality.

In most organizations, Karen's expectations of salaried people would also be considered quite reasonable. Salaried employees typically work as long as it takes to get the job done, which frequently means staying late or working at home. The vast majority put in more than forty hours a week.

During your career, you are likely to encounter managers with a wide variety of leadership styles. The key to success is adaptation, so working with Karen may turn out to be a valuable learning experience.

Some managers will think like you, but others will have a different approach. Use this table to compare yourself and your boss: [Understanding Work Style Differences](#).

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