



Dear Chief

By Jeff “Chief” Urbaniak
COLUMNIST

DEAR CHIEF: Today my boss went off on me after I made a mistake concerning inventory. Then she immediately went on about how I do so many other things wrong. Yet, on all those other occasions, she never said anything to me. How am I supposed to know I’m not doing things right?

STUNNED EMPLOYEE



DEAR STUNNED EMPLOYEE: It can be quite shocking and maybe even overwhelming when your boss goes off on you over a bunch of mistakes. This happens often as many bosses, especially the ones lacking in leadership and managerial skills, will typically let things build up until they explode.

Ken Blanchard, in his classic book *The One Minute Manager*, noted that most managers use “gunny-sack” discipline tactics: they store up examples

Always give periodic feedback

of an employee’s poor performance in a figurative gunny sack, never bothering to tell the employee what’s wrong, and then they fire away after a little incident, during annual reviews, or when they’re having a bad day. The employee is left to wonder where he went wrong and why his boss never gave him a chance to correct any of these problems.

Managers who use this technique are lazy and childish. There is not much you can do about this except to ask for periodic feedback. Maybe your boss will comply with your request or maybe she won’t. Of course you can seek affirmation after every little thing you do but that can make you appear to be an insecure and nagging employee.

Regardless, try to learn from this experience and then some day when you’re the boss, you’ll always know from first-hand experience that no one working for you can fix what’s wrong without knowing what’s wrong. Never assume people can or should read your

mind about things. They will not automatically know what you expect from them unless you tell them first.

An excellent solution when things go wrong is Ken Blanchard’s tactic of *one minute reprimands*. If a worker’s performance slips, the boss or supervisor should intervene immediately, explain what’s not right, ask the employee for an explanation, and then both should work together to correct the problem. (Perhaps maybe you can discreetly slip a copy of Ken Blanchard’s book under your boss’s door.)

Good luck with your situation and better luck when you’re at the helm.



For an opportunity to have your question, issue or concern addressed in the Dear Chief column, go to www.DearChiefAdvice.com and submit your comments or email them to Jeff@DearChiefAdvice.com.