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COLUMNIST

DEAR CHIEF: I was recently told that my handshake caused me to not get selected for an internal promotion within my company. It’s an obvious excuse so they don’t have to hurt my feelings. I’d prefer they be honest instead of humoring me with such nonsense. Why do managers feel the need to fabricate such a reason?

#### SQUISHED HAND



DEAR SQUISHED HAND: Sorry you didn’t get the promotion you were hoping for. Sometimes managers let people down easy when they don’t select them for promotions and sometimes they are brutally honest. I don’t know for sure about your manager but I can tell you this: some managers have unique ways of testing people to see if they’re a good fit for a certain job position. A few have admitted to me they’ve included their perception of a person’s handshake as part of their evaluation during a job interview or when deciding to promote someone to a leadership position. A handshake can tell quite a bit about a person.

# It’s all in the handshake

We shake hands often and usually quite unconsciously. Whether it’s a few times a day or a few times a week, we do it when meeting someone or getting reacquainted with someone.

There are so many signals given during that brief handshake. Either you’re silently communicating you’re supremely confident, utterly secure, or convincingly reassuring or maybe you’re hinting that you’re not a confident person, are insecure, or don’t care much about being in the other person’s presence. When you shake hands with someone, you should want them to be left with the impression of strength, confidence, power, and of someone totally in control of themselves. If you aren’t sure about the nature of your handshake have a friend tell you.

How do you make it better? Make it firm. You can always use the other hand to reassuringly grip both your hand and that of your boss, colleague, client, or friend. But don’t overdo it and leave them with crushed fingers.

Handshakes are very formal, old-fashioned things. Forget about the high fives, the Masonic twitches or anything gangster-style. Stick to the traditional style of handshake.

Good handshakers are the ones who proffer their hand first as well as shaking well. They exude confidence by announcing their name and offering their hand at the same time thus showing keenness, friendliness, a relaxed and confident approach, and a general air of assertiveness. They also look you in the eyes and say your name back to you. People like hearing their own name and it’s a memory enhancer for the person restating the name.

So take some time and find out more about your style of handshake. If it’s giving off the wrong signals about you, then practice a new handshake with someone you trust. If your handshake really was a determining factor in the decision to not promote you, then at least you now know for future situations. Don’t beat yourself up over this. Treat it as a valuable learning experience and use it to your advantage each and every day.



*For an opportunity to have your question, issue or concern addressed in the Dear Chief column, go to [www.DearChiefAdvice.com](http://www.DearChiefAdvice.com) and submit your comments or email them to [Jeff@DearChiefAdvice.com](mailto:Jeff@DearChiefAdvice.com).*