

Professionalism and Stress
The Thomas S. Biggs American Inns of Court
Team One Presentation
October 15, 2013

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Scenario One

Dealing with a Difficult Attorney

You serve Requests to Produce Documents on opposing counsel, requesting documents which are relevant to your client's claim. Based on information from your client, you are asking for documents which you believe will help you prove your case. Your requests are reasonable in scope and quantity and they comply with the applicable rules of procedure. In response, you receive an angry email from opposing counsel, which you notice he also copied to his client.

First, opposing counsel misrepresents the content of your discovery requests. Then, he claims that it is obvious that your client does not need the documents but is just using the case to destroy the opposing party's life. Attached to his email are his proposed Requests to Produce Documents. He makes 50 requests. Most are for documents irrelevant to any claim or defense, and none are limited to the time period at issue in the case. In his email, opposing counsel tells you that if you do not withdraw your Requests to Produce Documents, he will serve his Requests to Produce Documents, the case will drag on for years, and the costs to your client will ruin your client's business.

How should you respond to opposing counsel's email? Which parties should be included on your response? What should you do with your outstanding discovery requests? How and when should you communicate opposing counsel's email to your client?

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Scenario Two

Dealing with a Difficult Boss

You are an associate in the litigation department of Big Law. You have only been employed for three weeks and you are still unfamiliar with the computer system, your staff and the firm's culture. You have been assigned to report to three partners.

On Monday morning, Partner 1 comes into your office and asks you to review and answer discovery in a contract dispute case, in which you have had no involvement yet. You recognize that answering discovery will involve reviewing the operative pleadings to familiarize yourself with the case, speaking with the client, reviewing and compiling the documents, and preparing the corresponding response pleading. The discovery responses are due on Wednesday.

As soon as Partner 1 leaves your office, Partner 2 enters and asks you to research several issues involving trusts and estates litigation. She has a mediation scheduled on Wednesday so she needs the research by Tuesday morning. You have very limited experience in civil litigation in general, but absolutely no experience in trusts and estates litigation.

When Partner 2 leaves your office, you close your door and get down to business. Shortly thereafter, Partner 3 knocks and enters your office. He is involved in a heavily-contested divorce with child custody issues. The client has come storming into the office unannounced and demands to speak with Partner 3. Partner 3 was in a meeting and needs to get back to it. The meeting is scheduled to last most of the day. Partner 3 instructs you to calm the client down and address whatever issues need attention.

These assignments and instructions are in addition to those which you have already received, several of which have deadlines this week. What do you do? What kind of organizational or time management solutions should you utilize to balance the requests from each of the three partners? What other techniques or strategies can you use in order to complete all of these assignments? Should you discuss your situation with the partners? If you decide to, how should you approach them?

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Scenario Three

Dealing with a Difficult Client

A potential new client named Ricky Bobby comes into your office, complaining that his long-time best friend and former NASCAR teammate Cal Naughton defrauded him. After running a conflicts check, you agree to meet with Ricky. Ricky spends two hours telling you how Cal Naughton conspired to defraud him out of being the #1 driver, and how he stole his wife, Carley Bobby. Ricky also believes that his arch-enemy, Jean Girard, assisted Cal in this scheme. Ricky wants you to sue Cal Naughton, Jean Girard, and Carley Bobby. But, as with everything in Ricky's life, he wants a result quickly. And, Ricky does not have much money.

Ricky wants to know exactly how long it will take to get a judgment, how much it will cost him, and what the chances are of success. Every time you start to ask questions about the facts or about the documents to support those facts, he interrupts you. He assures you that you can get into the facts later, but for now he just wants the answers to his questions.

After the meeting concludes, you prepare an engagement letter summarizing the terms of your representation, including your hourly rate and what exactly you have agreed to do for Ricky. Because of Ricky's concerns at the meeting, you specifically include that you cannot guarantee success. After receiving the engagement letter, Ricky calls you, irate, because he believed that you guaranteed him that the lawsuit would only cost \$10,000, that it would be finished in three weeks, and that you estimated an 80% chance of success.

During your representation, you find that Ricky Bobby is a very demanding client and calls and emails you multiple times per day. Finally, in order to get a faster result and encourage a quick settlement, Ricky tells you to sue everyone that you can think of, including NASCAR and Ricky's kids, Walker and Texas Ranger. What do you do?

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DEALING WITH DIFFICULT

Judges, Lawyers, AND Clients



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Dealing With Difficult Lawyers

By Jan Michelsen, Esquire

Uncooperative. Irascible. Rude. Ruthless. Condescending. Untrustworthy. Unprepared. Unreasonable. Ill-mannered. Villainous. However you define the problem, we have all been there—on the other side of a conference table, a phone line, or a court room with a “difficult lawyer.” For many of us, the otherwise engaging, satisfying, and challenging practice of law is tainted and tarnished by those who confuse being adverse with being acrimonious. The former is inevitable in litigation. The latter is lawyer-created and entirely unnecessary.

Aside from the psychological and interpersonal costs of practicing with difficult lawyers, this behavior has serious consequences to clients, the court, and to the profession. Lawyers, both rookie and seasoned, cite their experiences dealing with difficult lawyers as the most despised part of their jobs, the aspect that most detracts from the quality of their work lives. Most attorneys are not difficult. Rather, most are committed individuals who entered the profession to assist clients, serve the public, and enjoy interesting and challenging work, not to fight over petty issues with childish and unreasonable foes. If good lawyers do nothing to thwart difficult lawyers’ “techniques” or let difficult lawyers call all the shots, the profession

will lose those it least can afford to lose—lawyers who are committed to civility, competence, and professionalism. In addition, clients lose. The cost of litigation increases and the progression slows in almost direct proportion to the jerk-quotient of the lawyers involved. Lawyers who communicate and cooperate reach the same legal result, but at less expense and in a shorter time. The courts and judges also are impacted. The constant need for judicial intervention and hand holding is a waste of time and public monies.

Despite the American Inns of Court’s commitment to civility, professionalism, ethics, and excellence

Continued on the next page

and a renewed attention by local, state, and national bar associations to the issue, this unfortunate breed of difficult lawyers is unlikely to become extinct anytime soon. In the meantime, there are some simple, even intuitive, tips to help lawyers keep their cool, maintain their sanity, protect their reputations, and represent their clients in the face of adversarial excess, obstructionist conduct, or just plain obnoxious behavior.

Don't meet aggression with aggression. It doesn't work and your client will be disadvantaged in the process.

Don't engage

Whatever you do, don't take the bait. If another lawyer raises her voice, lower yours. If that lawyer interrupts you, wait for her to finish before you respond. Return calls promptly even though she never does. Live up to your promises even though she routinely breaks hers. Don't allow the difficult lawyer to hook into your frustration, anxiety or anger. Hold your temper and avoid escalating the conflict. Don't meet aggression with aggression. It doesn't work and your client will be disadvantaged in the process.

Be Willing to Lose a Few Battles, But Win the War

As difficult as it is to resist getting in the last word, especially when you know you are correct, let some things go. Not every point needs to be argued to the death and not every disagreement needs to be resolved on the spot. Some extension requests, or joint motion language, or deposition locations are important enough to be disputed, but many are not. Conserve your energy for the most important principles and the arduous litigation tasks still to come—you will need it. Simply agree to disagree and move on.

Kill Him/Her with Kindness

Nothing is so disarming as patience, kindness, and politeness, especially with someone to whom those are foreign concepts. It is almost impossible for even the most acerbic lawyer to continue snarling at an adversary who is visibly unperturbed and seemingly immune to the insults or ineptitude that would rattle most rivals. Remember, the sweetest payback is victory. Accomplish that with a smile.

Keep Your Eye on the Prize

Difficult lawyers often employ devious and demeaning tactics to distract or frustrate an opponent, hoping you will just give up or give in. Regardless of the negative static and noise a difficult lawyer creates around the task or decision at hand, be it obtaining document production, eliciting deposition testimony, or complying with court rules and deadlines, tune it out. Never lose focus whether in a deposition, mediation, in court, on the phone, or sitting at your desk. Remain in control, with your attention firmly planted on your strategy, your objective, your goal. Ask yourself: what am I trying to do? what do I need to accomplish? Don't let anyone or anything, especially the difficult lawyer, employ means that will distract you from those ends.

Always Take the High Road

Perhaps the biggest challenge when dealing with difficult lawyers is not responding in kind. As humans, it is very easy to be seduced into a shouting match, a slug fest, slinging a handful of mud. More effective, albeit often painful, is to bite your tongue [hard] and remain always above the fray. If you give in and allow Mr. Rambo (or Ms. Ramba) to drag you down to his level, he wins and you risk sanctions.

Document Everything

When lawyers have proven themselves unreliable, untrustworthy, and unable to conduct a civil conversation, you must protect yourself and your client by documenting what was said, done, and agreed to outside of the court or court reporter. Otherwise, you may be faced with a "he said-you said" debate about an important aspect of an issue or procedure. However, remember that any communication you author may wind up in front of the court, so be objective. State the facts and leave out any editorial content or petty afterthoughts.

Documentation can also be helpful to making a record of the difficult behavior itself. Commit to writing the abusive or inappropriate language used, or the promises broken. This may be needed down the road if you have a future need to involve the court or lodge a complaint. The fringe benefit is if a difficult lawyer realizes that you are keeping track of his behavior, it can serve as a nagging "conscience" and perhaps prevent future outbursts.

Recognize Bullies For Who They Are—Insecure Control Freaks

Unlike the guy who stole your lunch money in 5th grade, Joe Bully, Esquire often tries to excuse his conduct as zealous advocacy. He may even have

convinced himself that he is simply doing his job. Strong arm tactics are especially problematic for new lawyers (and for females of all experience levels). Be vigilant. Keep your antennae up for the charming bully, the dishonest bully, and the Jekyll-Hyde bully. All will seek to exploit a lawyer's lack of experience and/or confidence, and make you doubt and question yourself and your skills. All you need do is recall the undisputed facts: You went to law school. You passed the bar. You've likely been mentored by others whose quality as lawyers (and as people) is much higher than the bully you face. Remember, bullying in any context is often a mask for the bully's own incompetence or insecurity. If possible, exude knowledge and confidence and determination, even if you are not feeling them.

Be prepared and prepare your client.

Difficult lawyers generally are equal opportunity annoyances. They disrespect everyone, including witnesses and clients. A difficult lawyer may resort to sarcasm, innuendo, or outright aggression in a deposition, settlement conference, mediation or other meeting. If you know the facts, the rules, and the law, you will be able to counter bluster with brilliance. Preparation breeds confidence, which is exactly what the difficult lawyer seeks to attack or undermine. You may not be able to prevent all incendiary statements or actions, but you can blunt them by preparing your witnesses and clients. Advise them in advance what to expect, and direct them not to engage a difficult lawyer on his (low) level. Your client's composure and professionalism, or that of the witness, will sap from the encounter most of the fun the difficult lawyer planned to have.

Don't Take it Personally

Although this is much easier said than done, it is key to staying sane in today's rough and tumble litigation arena. What people say about you may say more about them than it does about you. In many circumstances, the venom, lack of cooperation, and incompetence on the part of opposing counsel that is making your life difficult may have nothing to do with you, or nothing to do with the lawsuit. If you can, pity the difficult lawyer. Remember what Gazzo said to Rocky Balboa in 1976 after an egregious insult about his appearance: "Look, Rocky, some people just hate for no reason." And some of those people are lawyers.

Address Communication Breakdowns in Real Time

Do not accept rude or inappropriate conduct even for a moment. If opposing counsel is screaming, swearing, or threatening over the phone now, it will

only go downhill later. At the first use of profanity or disrespect by opposing counsel, communicate that you demand to be treated with respect and civility. If it continues, calmly inform the caller that you are concluding the call and suggest that he call back when he is not so angry if he wishes to make progress on the issue. Alternatively, you always can exercise your personal power and autonomy to terminate the privilege of ever speaking with you by phone and instruct the difficult lawyer that all future communication be in writing.

Call the difficult lawyer out as it is happening. When possible, use appropriate phrases in a calm, collected tone:

"That's not what I said"

"That was not my question"

"Please let me finish"

"I think we're actually saying the same thing"

Better yet, ask questions. Turning the tables on a naysayer is an effective means of revealing the fallacy in a rabid lawyer's strong-minded, "I'm-always-right" statement with much less risk of confrontation. If he rejects or mocks everything you say, ask him what he would propose instead. You might elicit embarrassed (and golden) silence.

An attorney who follows these guidelines may avoid most negativity from a difficult adversary. If not, and if the interactions deteriorate and the behavior bulges well outside the bounds of decency, ethics, and professionalism, you may have no choice but to involve a third party, such as the court or a disciplinary commission, to reign in the offending attorney. There are various rules of civil procedure that address a difficult lawyer's unacceptable conduct, such as unwillingness to cooperate in discovery, or that prevent behaving badly in deposition. In addition, there are Rules of Professional Conduct that prohibit incompetence, untruthfulness and other contumacious conduct. You should invoke these as a last resort, and be aware there is no guarantee sanctions or discipline will result. However, you owe it to yourself, your client, and the profession to ensure that the "good guys win" and that difficult lawyers realize that actions have consequences. ♦

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Practical Advice for Dealing With Difficult Clients

By Jason Hedman, Esquire and Guna Ose, Esquire

The phone rings in your office and you are informed that a particular client is on the line. You brace yourself for the tirade of complaints and threats that will soon be coming your way. How can a lawyer effectively maintain professionalism, legal ethics, and civility in the face of such bitterness, anger, and just plain rudeness? The key to maintaining a satisfying law practice is learning to deal with difficult clients.

Each and every one of us at some point in his or her career has represented the interests of a client who could be classified as “difficult”. Difficult clients can cause extreme stress in a lawyer’s practice. What options are available to a lawyer for dealing with a difficult client? Once a lawyer is representing a difficult client, how can the lawyer prevent and possibly avoid some of the problems?

The simplest way to avoid dealing with a difficult client is to learn to recognize which clients are likely to be “difficult” from the start. The initial client interview should reveal a lot about the potential client and what he expects from his lawyer. The lawyer should take charge and outline the ground rules for legal representation at the beginning of the case. The

ground rules should be followed throughout the entire legal representation and it is the lawyer’s job to take the lead in this area. The best practice, when recognizing that a client will need more attention and be more demanding than the average client, is to outline expectations for both sides and explain the role of the lawyer. A written communication confirming what can be done and what will not be tolerated will help when dealing with a difficult client. The client should then know exactly which tasks the lawyer is willing to accept and perform as well as exactly which obligations the client has to the lawyer. In addition, clearly setting forth the fee arrangement in advance helps the client to understand the fees he will be paying. Outlining the objectives of legal representa-

tion can limit the number of phone calls, questions, and problems with the client.

It is important for the lawyer to remember that most clients are not trying to be difficult and are just concerned about their case. Oftentimes, the client's case is the only and most important case the client will have and his livelihood or very freedom is dependent upon the lawyer's job performance. Clients are often not aware of the ethical rules governing a lawyer's conduct and gauge the results the lawyer produces by comparing that lawyer to Hollywood and TV shows. These unreasonable expectations can lead to overwhelming the lawyer with questions and requests irrelevant to the litigation. The lawyer, by proactively helping the client to understand the progress of the case and what is relevant and important to the resolution of the case, will ease tension and help to build confidence between the client and the lawyer. It will also help the client to focus on gathering important information that can be useful in court.

The lawyer needs to ensure that the legal representation contract or engagement letter (a written engagement letter is greatly preferred) explains the lawyer's role and outlines the charges for phone calls, letters, and meetings, etc. (Rule 4-1.5 Fees and Costs for Legal Services). Documentation is an essential part of dealing with a difficult client. The client should be provided advice and potential courses of action in writing with an explanation of each decision. If the client makes unreasonable requests, it is to the lawyer's benefit to spend time explaining to the client why the requests are unreasonable. A lawyer should always keep the client adequately informed. In fact, Rule 4-1.3 Diligence requires the lawyer to keep his client informed and communicate with them.

When working with a difficult client, communication is of the utmost importance. Establish communication boundaries and set a reasonable schedule. Take the time to let the client know when and how he will be updated and be sure to follow through. If a lawyer conscientiously keeps his word, even a difficult client will learn to trust him and worry less. (Rule 4-1.4 Communication).

If the client is not convinced that the lawyer's advice is sound legal advice, sometimes it can help to step away and let another legal professional talk to the client and give a second opinion. The lawyer should be trusted to abide by the client's decisions and instructions concerning the objectives of representation, but is also bound by obligations to the court and in charge of the trial and litigation strategy. Without question, the client's objective

has to be an ethical and proper objective and not a fraudulent claim or bad faith course of conduct. (Rule 4-1.2 Scope of Representation). If a client consistently insists that a lawyer violate ethical standards or otherwise act improperly, ethical rules demand that the lawyer cease representation and, if a pending court matter is proceeding, perhaps file a motion to withdraw from further representation and terminate the attorney/client relationship. The damage that can be done to a lawyer's reputation by following questionable conduct on behalf of a client can be irreparable.

There is an old saying that the best client you will ever have is the one you do not take. Sometimes it is far better for a lawyer to not take a client than to undertake representation of a client and have nightmares wondering if he is going to be subjected to grievance procedures by the local bar association or be served with an unjustified malpractice suit. (Rule 4-1.16 Declining or Terminating the Representation). If the client is difficult and hard to deal with as a prospective client, it might get worse once formal legal representation has commenced. If the luxury of refusing to represent a certain person is not an option, the next best course of conduct is to establish reasonable boundaries from the beginning of the representation and outline the limits of the legal representation. In all matters, maintain decorum, professionalism, and respect in all actions and do not allow the client's rudeness, inconsiderate actions, or lack of respect to tarnish your professionalism and relationship to even a difficult client.

Finally, even an experienced lawyer should have access to a mentor. Bringing a difficult client and seemingly "no win" situation to an experienced and trusted advisor, may give an opportunity for comfort and practical strategies to help turn the relationship around or the encouragement needed to terminate the relationship with a difficult client. Wise lawyers trust input from staff persons as some difficult clients will show their true colors to a receptionist or secretary, yet conceal true attitudes when dealing with the lawyer.

Hopefully, the foregoing advice will help lawyers to avoid dealing with difficult clients and, if in the process of dealing with a difficult client, give hope to bring the representation to an end on an amicable basis. ♦

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Forbes



Jacquelyn Smith, Forbes Staff

If it has to do with leadership, jobs, or careers, I'm on it.

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10 Tips For Dealing With An Overly Demanding Boss

All jobs are demanding at times, and it's often the boss's responsibility to get her staff to rise to the occasion—but some bosses go too far by putting excessive pressure on their employees.



“An overly demanding boss might require you to work beyond the regular schedule even when the volume of work does not require it; he might insist on extra reporting that never even gets read; order lots of ‘special projects’; or want to approve every decision you make,” says Rita Friedman, a Philadelphia-based [career coach and resume writer](#).

Ryan Kahn, a career coach, founder of [The Hired Group](#), star of MTV's *Hired*, and author of *Hired! The Guide for the Recent Grad*, agrees. He says an overly demanding boss is someone who sets extremely high standards and expectations on work deliverables or goals, which may be unrealistic or unsustainable. “If you find your project list growing and changing rapidly and performance targets increasing, you just may have an overly demanding boss.”

An overly demanding boss doesn't empathize or understand what's required for you to deliver results, and he will keep pushing you until you take action, adds Lynn Taylor, a national workplace expert and author of *Tame Your Terrible Office Tyrant: How to Manage Childish Boss Behavior and Thrive in Your Job*.

“Demanding bosses give you unreasonable deadlines, are not in tune with the hours it takes to meet objectives, won't take the time to find out in advance what's reasonable, can display little interest in your well-being, have trouble prioritizing, and give you little recognition when you do complete Herculean tasks,” she says. “They may not take the time to see if you have the tools or information you need to accomplish your assignments, and can make themselves unapproachable so that your only option seems to be: *just do it.*”

Why might a boss act this way? A desire to control everything; fear for his or her own job status; a yearning for perfection; or a sense of entitlement, Taylor says. "Whatever the root cause, these types of bosses are often like unruly toddlers who act as if the world really *does* revolve around them. Asking nicely doesn't always occur to these bosses, and so the onus is on you to break your silence and be the voice of reason."

An overly demanding boss can be extremely difficult to work with, and his behavior might cause a spike in stress levels, and a decline in morale and productivity.

"While a little bit of pressure can inspire workers to rise to the challenge, people who work for overly demanding bosses usually feel frustrated that their efforts are not rewarded, and as a result, they are unlikely to continue to pump out high quality work," Friedman says. "A bad boss can also cause co-workers to turn against each other as they try to appease management, and there's a big difference between healthy competition and infighting in the workplace."

This type of exacting boss is likely to be an overbearing micromanager. "Not only does this take a toll on workers' morale and the overall office environment, but it can actually have the opposite of the intended effect: When employees are constantly being pressured to perform at an unsustainable level or required to run every action through a higher-up, productivity tends to drop off. It's also common to find that overly demanding bosses end up having high-turnover workplaces, and when team members quit or are driven out, it puts even more of a burden on the remaining staff, which leads to even more employee burnout."

Suzana Simic, manager of career services at Computer Systems Institute, adds: "Overly demanding bosses seem to regard their employees as dispensable commodities, rather than assets. With that being said, it can be extremely difficult to help solve a problem or prevent one from occurring when an employee feels bogged down by their overly demanding boss." Employees of an overly demanding boss may also feel as though nothing they accomplish is ever enough, she says. "When an overly demanding boss comes into the room, the employees' demeanor changes to one filled with stress and apprehension. Employees become weighed down with 'pleasing' the overly demanding boss, and they may create errors based on trying to be perfect."

Another possible outcome: You may be more upset with yourself than you are with your boss because you're caught between the conflict of wanting to perform and avoid appearing incompetent – and upsetting your boss by speaking up, Taylor says. "It's bothersome because you feel you can't ignite confrontation and ask for reasonable expectations. You may fear retaliation, passive-aggressive fallout, loss of job status or exciting projects, or even being terminated, which is a conundrum, until you muster the ability to face the problem head-on."

Eventually the inner conflict you have with an overly demanding boss can consume you; it detracts from you doing your best work. "You end up with the double whammy of an intense workload, combined with a behavioral clash, sinking your productivity. Overbearing, insensitive bosses are counterproductive to the very goal they seek: more output from you."

Kahn says though overly demanding bosses may be impatient, overly direct, and even intimidating; are not likely to accept excuses on missing deadlines or goals; and may even have a high churn rate through their staff as they

search for individuals who can meet their high expectations — working for an overly demanding boss is not *always* a bad thing. “In many cases, these are high-performing individuals who are moving quickly up the corporate ladder. They set high expectations for their team since they have high expectations for themselves. While working with an overly demanding boss may be challenging, it also has the potential to be an incredible learning experience. The key to success is learning to how to manage up with this personality type.”

Taylor says if you *don't* learn how to manage up with a demanding boss, you will suffer the consequences of never feeling that your work is satisfactory. “The quality and quantity of your deliverables will decline, and so will your self-esteem,” she says. “You must learn how to bravely and clearly communicate the details of your assignments so that your boss is more aware. You cannot assume that your boss understands the hours associated with assignments. These bosses must be made aware of the importance of priorities and your human limits. Most importantly, you must take the initiative in creating mutually agreeable expectations.”

Here are 10 tips for dealing with an overly demanding boss:

Don't take it personally. A demanding boss is focused on delivering results to his or her boss, not on the negative fallout you may feel that your work is never enough, Taylor says. “Study how other team members react and you'll likely see that your boss is consistently an over-achiever or expects others to be.”

Simic agrees. “Realize that an overly demanding boss may have their own overly demanding boss looming over them. Don't take things personally.”



Consider why your boss is being so demanding. Is it just a personality issue, or is there pressure from even higher up to meet certain objectives? “This can make a difference in how you approach the situation,” Friedman says.

Kahn concurs. He says it's important to “read the room.” If your boss is also working to meet a goal or juggling multiple deadlines, make sure you're being sensitive to that in your interactions. “Provide high-level updates on what they need to know and avoid chitchat unless they initiate.”

Don't be a punching bag. “Don't keep taking lumps with a smile on your face, be a martyr, or take responsibility for things that are out of your control,” Taylor says. “Your boss has invested time in you, so you have leverage in letting him know the ramifications of his work style. You have the needed skills set, are relied upon and know the company culture. If you're performing well, it's expensive and time-consuming to replace you. Keep that in mind when you are ready to approach your boss.”

Gently confront the boss. “Approach your boss with a calm, professional, rational style,” Taylor says. “Don't get caught up in the hysteria and try to keep a sense of humor to simmer any existing tension.” A little levity can go a long way in disarming a tense, demanding

boss. And a lot of your success also depends on the delivery and timing of your discussion.

Listen and repeat. Make sure you are always listening carefully, as ideas and directions may come quickly, Kahn suggests. "If you're unsure about anything, ask clarifying questions. At the end of your meetings, repeat back the deliverables that you are responsible for to make sure you are on the same page." And you never know: When the boss hears you rattle off your responsibilities, he might realize how unreasonable his expectations really are.

Set mutual expectations and priorities. "When your boss gives you an assignment, review where it sits on the priority list; give an estimate of how long it will take and what, if anything, you need to complete it," Taylor says. Offer a reality check on how a new assignment affects your other ones and the potential for other missed deadlines. "Come to an agreement before you run off and find yourself in a hodgepodge of unreasonable tasks."

Stay positive. Your sense of calm and commitment to delivering the best results will be appreciated, and help coach your boss in a better direction, Taylor says.

Be a problem-solver, not a problem-maker. If you're going to miss deadlines, raise your hand early on. Come prepared to present your boss with potential solutions to show that you have the same sense of urgency as they do about projects, Kahn says. "If you encounter obstacles to completing a project, also bring these to your boss with potential solutions. They may not be the right solution, but this type of boss will appreciate your effort to help solve."

Friedman says if there's a corporate-level goal your boss is trying to attain, it may make more sense to try to figure out alternate ways of reaching that target. "She may even know that what the company is asking for is unreasonable, and may appreciate the extra help in brainstorming ways to boost productivity. If you have some ideas on ways to improve workflow or encourage the team to ramp up performance, approach your boss with sympathy, and offer your suggestions in a spirit of cooperation. The goal is probably less about getting credit for your ideas than getting a better working environment out of it."

Use positive reinforcement. Praise your boss when you see the behavior you strive for, like planning ahead together, and ensuring that your goals and deadlines are reasonable and aligned, Taylor suggests. "Say something like, 'I appreciated that you understood that we'd have to push back the XYZ project by a couple of days to tackle this new initiative.'"

Celebrate successes. Be sure to flag your successes for your boss, Kahn says. "Since they are so focused on reaching goals, they may inadvertently miss some of your achievements. They will appreciate you flagging these since, at the end of the day, your success is also their success."

Taylor says you can do this by creating regular status reports. "Your manager will better understand your behind-the-scenes work if you detail it out in regular e-mails," she says. "This will show your boss how productive you are and what it takes. Don't overdue and risk looking like you're in over your head. You don't want your report to run for five pages

every other day, or you'll appear confrontational and passive aggressive. Be factual and concise so your boss can focus and prioritize."

"Some bosses have been taught that being very demanding is the only way to get results, from prior jobs or the current one," Taylor concludes. "It might be a management culture. That doesn't mean you should mimic the style with your own team. Instead, role model the person you want your demanding manager to be by clearly describing workflow and priorities. You'll do yourself, your boss, and others a big favor."

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