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# DOCKET

*INFORMED. INDISPENSABLE. IN-HOUSE.*

**Dear Boss**

**Skills and Professional Development**



Dear Boss,

Since our organization has finally consented to let staff participate in your annual evaluation, we thought we should let you know what to expect. We often thought it was interesting that we were evaluated by our superiors, who are the most aware of our jobs, while management was evaluated by their superiors, who only have a vague understanding of their leadership capabilities.

This communication was not done lightly; however, we believe it is necessary for your continued growth as a leader to hear the perspective of your staff. We discussed whether we should start with something positive, provide areas for improvement, and then end on a positive note. However, since you are management, we decided to yank the Band-Aid off and give you the unvarnished truth.

You are currently an excellent leader, but the road to excellence was paved on our backs. It's important to remember that there was a time when you were not the leader that you are now. We look around this organization and see others who have not grown into their leadership roles as gracefully as you. Maybe this letter is something you can share with them.

When you first came to us you were — quite frankly — a bully. You were only interested in your own opinion and never asked for input from your team. Or rather, you frequently asked for input but were not interested in the answers you received. When one of us was fortunate enough to get a word in edgewise, you summarily dismissed it.

Further, whenever one of us had an opinion or a suggestion that countered your own, you ridiculed it. The result? We stopped providing input when you asked, which led you to believe that your way was the only way to succeed. It's no surprise that more than a few people left the company.

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Besides pretending that you care, you also took credit for every idea that the team successfully produced and scapegoated us when things went wrong. I'm not sure whether you understood how demoralizing that was for us. It seemed like we could never do anything right in your eyes. As we talked through your evaluation, we shared story after story of your failure to thank us for any of our contributions. Yet, you were selected by your peers as manager of the year three times. It's something that we still don't understand.

You've been arrogant, cold, and standoffish. You act as though you've never made a mistake in your life. And, if it weren't for the incompetent group of misfits that you're saddled with, you probably would've gotten that big promotion you wanted.

We're not sure how it happened, but you changed your ways. Was it the leadership book we gave you two years ago for your birthday? Or was it the monthly "Lead The Way" columns we've left in your inbox? Whatever caused your transformation, it's a change that we appreciate. It has not only made you a better leader, but it has made us a stronger team.

Now when you ask for input, we feel like you not only hear us, but you appreciate and value a variety of thought before making your ultimate decision. At our recent staff meeting, you rolled out our team's new initiative. Not only did you share the credit for the project, but you actually talked about how the team brainstormed 10 really good ideas into the one that we ultimately selected. Did you hear that? You said the one "we" selected. Gone are the days where our team was all about you. You no longer treat us as an inconvenient truth, but rather, as partners working toward a shared vision.

These changes obviously didn't happen overnight. It took time for us to trust you again, given how badly you treated us in the past. While there is still room for improvement, we like the direction you're headed and are happy that you've brought us along for your journey.

We thank you for taking the time to see us as people, who have thoughts and experiences that benefit the team. We thank you for getting to know our individual strengths and goals so that we can better grow in our roles. It can truly be said that the whole is now greater than the sum of our parts.

Thank you for recognizing that you needed to change.

Sincerely,

Your TEAM (Together Everyone Achieves More)

Whitnie Wiley



Former ACC Docket Columnist

**Whitnie Wiley** was a long-time columnist for the *ACC Docket*, where she wrote the *Lead the Way* column for more than seven years. The column provided leadership tips for in-house counsel and others as they pursue their personal and professional goals.