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How Not to Want to Kill Your Boss (and Maybe Even Like Him)

Have you ever wanted to kill your boss?

I don't mean literally. Maybe more along the lines of hoping he or she comes down with a bad case of food poisoning and misses the next, say, 3 1/2 years of work.

I know the feeling. It's one of the reasons I went scorched earth and got rid of bosses altogether. But what if that's not for you? What if you're stuck with a boss that is (gasp!) imperfect?

The good news that there is hope. You don't have to "just deal with it" and you certainly don't need to daydream about 37 ways to get your boss to stand on an unstable cliff.

I was fortunate recently to interview Karin Hurt about her new book, [Overcoming an Imperfect Boss: A Practical Guide to Building a Better Relationship With Your Boss](#). In the interview below and in the book itself, you will learn how to develop a better relationship with your boss, even if that seems impossible now.

Not just for non-bosses

Oh...and good news...if YOU are the boss, this book still applies. It will help you become the boss you *wish* you had. So go spend less than \$10 to be a better boss or to overcome the imperfect one you work for. Check out my guarantee at the end. Buying the book is 100% risk-free.

About Karin: Karin is a seasoned professional with tons of leadership experience. Prior to this spring, she was Executive Director of the Strategic Partnership Channel at Verizon Wireless. In other words, she is an authority on this stuff. She's had some great bosses and some...imperfect ones. And she's been a high-performing leader for some time herself. She recently took the entrepreneurial plunge herself and now writes at [Let's Grow Leaders](#).

Interview with Karin Hurt, author of *Overcoming an Imperfect Boss*

Q: *Of all the topics you could have chosen, why did you start with Imperfect Bosses as your first book?*

A: The supervisor relationship is the number one predictor of employee engagement and job satisfaction. Yet most people screw up this powerful association. The tragedy is that too many

people leave the magic of what could be a game-changing relationship untapped. They follow traditional boss-subordinate protocol... they don't get too close, don't say too much, and don't push the envelope. People do the best with the boss they've been given. It doesn't have to be that way.

Q: *Why is it so hard to get these relationships right?*

A: The boss-subordinate relationship is unnatural by design. We sell our power for money. We look to a person we have not chosen (whom we may or may not respect) for affirmation, evaluation, and reward. In order to succeed we strive to figure out what will make this guy like us and adjust our style accordingly. We take every criticism personally, even when we don't believe it. We take this already unnatural structure and impose even more awkward performance feedback systems.

Can you imagine giving your wife a year-end appraisal? "Your cooking's improved and you're taking out the trash. You get an A in housework. But your new job has you so stressed lately; I have to give romance a B-."

If such tactics wouldn't work with people who know and love us, why would we imagine they would enhance trust at work?

Q: *Without naming names, what is the worst experience you've had with a boss of yours?*

A: She was very arrogant and left a tremendous backlash in her wake. I found myself in a constant position of protecting and buffering my team, which was exhausting.

Q: *Have you ever been a bad boss?*

A: Of course. I learned much of this the hard way.

Ironically, one of my biggest moments of imperfection was while I was writing this book. I was going through a really tough couple of weeks. The cocktail of business challenges was really affecting our performance.

I didn't realize how much my stress showed on the outside until a trusted member of my team stated bluntly, "you're changing." He was right. I had been so worried about our mission, our cause, and our careers that I tried to protect my team by getting overly involved. I began inviting myself to calls and requiring more rehearsals and executive readouts. Instead of trusting my competent team, I scrutinized every page of every PowerPoint deck. I was showing up like the bad bosses I was writing about.

I'm so grateful that he was willing to stage an intervention. I called every team member, apologized, backed off and of course... results improved.

Q: *If someone is stuck with a bad boss, what advice would you give him or her?*

A: Invest deeply in getting to know them more fully. Understand their motivations and try to help them improve. Depending on what makes them "bad" your techniques will vary, but most start with open, calm, unemotional, private communication. I've seen many a turn-around success story. I hope some of your readers will share their experiences in the comments.

Q: *What advice do you have for my readers whose boss won't listen to their ideas?*

A: Start in private, without emotion, with strong research, data and a convincing argument. Use the P.E.R.S.U.A.D.E. model. You can read more about that [here](#).

Q: *What if you just don't know where you stand with your boss?*

A: Set up a meeting with your boss only on this topic, rather than trying to squeeze it as a footnote to some other meeting. Express your honest desire for sincere feedback, and then really listen.

Note from Matt: Read this to learn [how to get more face time with your boss](#).

Q: *Off the topic of the book a bit here. You recently left your job as an executive at one of the top companies in the world. What led you to make that decision?*

A: The calling to help people maximize their leadership potential became too hard to resist. I knew if I didn't do this I would die with regrets.

Q: *Can you share how your entrepreneurial experience has been so far?*

A: Exciting and scary. The best part is I love how I spend my days and all the wonderful people I am getting to know. I'm getting solid base hits, which feels just about right for this stage of the game.

My guarantee

If you buy Karin's book [Overcoming an Imperfect Boss](#) and you don't think it's worth at least five times what you paid for it, [email me](#) and I'll buy the book from you for your full purchase price.

That's my guarantee. That's how much I believe in the book.

What are some ways you've dealt with an imperfect boss?