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The New Boss

By Paperitalo Staff

Welcome to the season of change. You know, the last couple of months of the year when companies resolve to stop doing whatever they were doing that did not work and move on. This may mean you are declared "redundant" (something that has happened to a good colleague of mine already here at the beginning of the season) or it may mean you will have a new boss or new owners. Your future career opportunities, at least for the next few years, will be determined by how you act in the first week of this new experience, whatever it may be for you.

In some ways, you are lucky if you are let go and have to find a new position. For when you find that new position, you know it is new and you will be on your best behavior.

The foolish person is the one who finds a new boss or new owner over them and protests at the first change with something like: "We don't do things that way here" or "Well, when I came here I had an understanding that I would never have to do that." Idiots!

Unless you are being asked to do something that is not legal, moral, or ethical, you sharply say, "Yes, ma'am (or sir)" and move on. The new person over you is there precisely because the managers or owners further up the line have decided things must be done differently. It makes not one bit of difference what understandings or arrangements you had with prior management. A new sheriff is in town, and they are to be obeyed.

Especially the first week or so. The new manager is absorbing information at a very high rate, looking for clues as to where the problems might be, where the opportunities exist. Your job is to be professional and to demonstrate you know how to "spin the invoice printer" (you may not want to use my words, but rather the intent--my words may end up labeling you as crazy or worse). Anyway, you get the idea.

Some bosses come in looking for someone to fire, just to show everyone else they mean business. I found out later I was in the crosshairs for this one time, but the new boss quickly assessed he could not do without me. He had a predisposition to fire maintenance managers, and although not the manager, maintenance reported to me. I had only been at the site a few months myself and maintenance was in terrible shape. What saved me, he told me later, was every time we were down for an emergency--day, night or weekend, I called him from the site of

the catastrophe with a succinct report of what happened, what we were doing to fix it, and when we would be up again. He quickly decided I was someone he could do without.

Instead, he fired the production manager, who had explicitly told his direct reports that he was not to be bothered from 4:30 pm on Friday afternoons until 7:00 am on Monday mornings. I think he lasted about a month.

So, when you find yourself reporting to someone new, no matter the circumstances that got you there, remember your job is to legally, ethically, and morally spin the invoice printer. That's it. That's all there is. Very simple, but often stumbled.

For safety this week, do remember that new people in your facility, even bosses, may not know your unique safety issues. Pausing to make sure they understand any safety rules in your area should be something any new manager will take time to do.

Be safe and we will talk next week. ##