



# TAMING

# THE ABRASIVE

# MANAGER

HOW TO END UNNECESSARY ROUGHNESS IN THE WORKPLACE



## Appendix

### Are You Abrasive? (Self-Test)

1. Have you ever been asked to:
  - a. Improve your communication skills
  - b. Control your temper
  - c. Learn to get along with others
  - d. Not get so "worked up"
  - e. Not be so hard on coworkers
2. Have you been passed over for promotion and can't get anyone to give you specific reasons for the decision?
3. Have you been passed over for promotion because of your people management skills?
4. Do you find yourself in intense and unresolved confrontations with
  - a. Superiors
  - b. Peers
  - c. Subordinates
  - d. Human resource staff
5. Have complaints been brought against you for inappropriate conduct, such as
  - a. Harassment
  - b. Discrimination
  - c. Hostile treatment

6. Do you have a nickname that refers to dangerous behaviors (such as "Axe-Man," "Terminator," "The Ripper") or dangerous animals ("Pit Bull," "Wildebeest," "Tyrannosaurus")?
7. Do people avoid you at work?
8. Do employees attempt to transfer out of your department or avoid transferring into it?
9. Do you have enemies at work? If so, how many?
10. Do you frequently find yourself intensely frustrated by coworkers?
11. Do you generally feel that you are smarter than your coworkers?
12. Do people choose their words very carefully so as not to offend you?
13. Have you received low scores for team building, participative management, or other so-called "soft" skills on a management skills assessment?
14. Do you dislike coworkers who are less competent than you?
15. Do you take pleasure in demonstrating to others that they are less competent?
16. If so, do you openly refer to selected coworkers as
  - a. Lazy
  - b. Stupid
  - c. Incompetent
  - d. A bunch of idiots
  - e. Other pejorative descriptions
17. Do you engage in any of the following behaviors at work?
  - a. Publicly criticizing others
  - b. Hostile humor or teasing

- c. Shouting
- d. Profanity
- e. Making threats
- f. Publicly humiliating others
- g. Temper outbursts
- h. Physical intimidation (such as throwing objects or slamming doors)
  - i. Ignoring others or giving others the silent treatment
  - j. Name-calling
  - k. Making condescending statements
  - l. Nonverbal expressions of disdain (rolling eyeballs, snorting, snickering, and so on)

### Scoring

- If you answered yes to *any* of the following questions, there is a strong possibility that you are perceived as abrasive: 2, 3, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14.
- If you answered yes to *any* of the remaining questions, *you are behaving abrasively*: 1, 4, 5, 6, 8, 15, 16, 17. These questions refer to unacceptable workplace behavior or extreme coworker reactions signifying abrasion.

### Recommendations

- **Get as much feedback as you can, as soon as you can.** Make it easy (in other words, nonthreatening) for others to give you feedback. Tell them you are concerned that you may be coming across in ways that you do not intend, and reassure them that you will be grateful for their frank input. Listen calmly, take notes, ask questions for clarification, and above all *do not attempt to defend yourself*. The goal is to collect data on how you are perceived, period.

- **Apologize.** “I see now that when I interrupt, it may give the impression that I think my thoughts are more valuable. I don’t mean to give that impression, and I’m sorry that I did.”
- **Ask for further feedback.** “If you see me doing that again, will you let me know? I’d appreciate it.”
- **Thank coworkers for having the courage to open up, and reassure them that they are helping—not harming—you.** “Thanks again for speaking frankly. It really helped—it opened my eyes.”
- **Get help if you are unable to change your abrasive behavior.** Ask your employer to refer you to a specialist who works with abrasive individuals, and if that’s not an option, seek help on your own.

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