

# Why You Probably CAN'T CHANGE Your Boss

BY PHIL COOKE

Have you ever worked for an organization you knew had a bad leader, but you thought you could change him or her? I've talked to countless frustrated employees who have attempted just that, and I can tell you, it doesn't work. By the time a pastor, CEO, or other leader reaches that place in his or her career, they've been at it a long time and developed a routine. So for anyone to think they can turn on a dime is simply a hallucination.

Journalist *Peggy Noonan* wrote recently about the issue: "Seven years ago I was talking to a long-time Democratic operative on Capitol Hill about a politician who was in trouble. The politician was likely finished, he said. I was surprised. Can't he change things and dig himself out? No. "People do what they know how to do." Politicians don't have a vast repertoire. When they get in a jam they just do what they've always done, even if it's not working anymore."

The same could be said for most bad or ineffective leaders. Certainly we need to adjust for the times, change when necessarily, and always be willing to shift our thinking. But in the vast majority of cases, poor leaders simply can't do it. Early in my career I wasted far too many years working with a leader who simply didn't have the capacity to change, so I know the difficulty from experience. So what do we do?

- 1. Stop signing on to a job thinking you can change the boss.** More than likely, it will never happen. You'll only leave frustrated and bitter – not to mention having wasted months or years trying.
- 2. Find an organization that compliments your skill set.** I love the old saying, "Go where you are celebrated, not where you are tolerated."
- 3. If you're stuck right now – look for an escape route.** Stop thinking you can change a bad boss, and start finding a boss you don't have to change. Look around – you may be surprised at the possibilities.

Have any readers learned this lesson the hard way?





# Why Leadership by Threat isn't Leadership

The New Testament book of Mark is a powerful example of who responded to the message of Jesus and who didn't. Chapter 12 is an especially good example. The people (Mark describes them as "thongs") loved his message, but those who resisted were those in authority, because they saw his message as a threat. Sadly, too many leaders today attempt to use threats as a leadership technique. I see that in many churches, non-profits, and businesses today. Many leaders don't inspire their team, so they threaten them, thinking it's a good motivator.

You know what I'm talking about. Leaders or managers who say things like "If you can't do this, there's plenty of other people I can call." Or "This is your last chance, you better not screw it up." Or tinge every request with a dramatic, ominous – and overblown – ultimatum.

Supposed "leaders" who use threats against their team are people who have run out of ideas. They

have no personal credibility, and although they may have a title, they have little earned authority. Stop and reflect on how you communicate with your team. If you ever feel a threat is needed, know at that moment you've already lost their respect.

There are no hopeless situations, only leaders who have run out of ideas. Threats – either real or implied telegraph the message to your team that your authority isn't enough, and your talent isn't enough. When it comes to your employees, team members, or vendors, there's no room in leadership for threats.

