

Dear Claudia, 'How can I cope when all I hear at work are complaints?'

Dear Claudia:

I'm the supervisor over 20 sales people. The organization we work for continually has contests to promote sales volume. I've noticed that during the contests productivity really does go up. But immediately afterward, motivation drops.

I'm beginning to think these contests aren't as efficient or productive as they're supposed to be. What are your feelings regarding contests as employee rewards?

"Not-so-Sure"

Dear "Not-so":

Rewarding employees serves as a way to motivate them to produce more only if you consider these guidelines when offering the reward. Have an array of awards to help keep motivation at peak levels. A single reward may not be enough for high performers.

Be sure that all the rewards are perceived as important—or high performers might lower their output to go elsewhere. Don't give out rewards for sub-standard performance; you'll lower employee standards.

Don't inhibit teamwork by measuring performance with an "I win, you

lose" basis. Have employees work against their past achievements or outside competitors. Throughout, keep in mind that your goal is higher performance and increased profits.

Don't shrink away from sharing a portion of the increased profits with employees.

Dear Claudia:

I work in the consumer complaint department of my organization. All day long all I ever hear is one complaint after another.

Do you have anything to suggest that will help me cope with my job?

"Heard it All"

Dear "Heard it All"

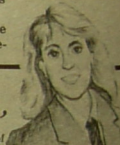
Consumer complaints seem to be a way of life in business, but the problem is more acute in your particular department. According to statistics from the Technical Assistant Research Program, about 32.4 percent of U.S. households experienced some sort of consumer problem last year, while at least one in four purchases generates some sort of consumer disapproval. As for dealing with

it, there isn't any way to escape complaints if you're going to work in a complaint department. But you can learn to live with your position by changing your perspective a little. Instead of seeing yourself as a human punching bag and letting disgruntled customers work out their frustrations on you all day

long, try focusing on the problem solving aspect of your job.

Career Communications

"Getting Along on the Job"



long, try focusing on the problem solving aspect of your job.

You're there to do more than listen to complaints and absorb abuse; you're there to help solve the problems you hear about. Take satisfaction in the good you do and the frustrations you have to endure along the way will be easier to take.

Dear Claudia:

I've had four jobs in the past two years, and now I'm starting my fifth. At each of the previous jobs, I've had problems getting along with my boss. The result is that I've either been terminated or decided to quit on my own.

I'd like to keep the job I have now. My new boss seems pleasant enough, but I keep waiting for something bad to happen.

"Apprehensive"

Dear "Apprehensive":

Getting along with the boss should be one of your top priorities. When the boss has confidence in you, your job will be

much easier. Your boss will share information more readily, and be supportive when you're having problems. Your boss will be more likely to give you extra help when the time is right.

Since you'd like to improve your relationship with your current boss, the following can help you get started:

- **Make your boss look good.** This may sound like apple polishing, but it isn't. You're part of the management team and you need to work with—not against—your boss.
- **Understand what bosses expect.** Bosses generally expect results, good rapport with fellow employees, a balanced view of the importance of their duties, someone who knows the importance of people and tasks, good problem-solving skills, and good delegation skills.


- **Realize how bosses communicate.** Bosses generally like a bird's eye view of the job. When you approach your boss with a problem, he has to consider how whatever you're talking about will affect the big picture. Bosses have short attention spans. They have to learn to manage many projects at the same time. You can help by preparing ahead of time or meeting with the boss.

Claudia answers work-related questions to the Pierce County Business Examiner in every issue.

Questions to Claudia can be addressed to: 5007 Pacific Highway East, Tacoma, 98434

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