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9 Things A Boss Should Never Say To An Employee

There's been a fair amount of discussion recently in the media on the worst communication mistakes employees make, and the negative comments employees should never say to a boss. This week, I'd like to turn the tables. There are likewise expressions a manager should never proclaim to an employee. Today's article will benefit all thoughtful bosses and be a reminder of good management principles as well. Based on the comments I have received from both managers and employees, combined with a report from [U.S. News](#), here's my own list of things a supervisor should never say to an employee.



#1 Don't Say – "I pay your salary. You have to do what I say". This statement is dictatorial. Threats and power plays are not the way to inspire loyalty or great performance from the individual workers. Great executives lead by inspiring, teaching, encouraging, and even serving their employees. Good leaders do not need to threaten.

#2 Don't Say – "You are very lucky to receive this bonus. Other companies are only giving their staff a frozen turkey". A wise boss recognizes it's his employees that produce profits and is never condescending to them. A bright manager should always be happy to reward industrious employees who contribute to the well being of an organization.

#3 Don't Say – "I was here late last night, and on Saturday morning. Where were you?" Expressing veiled pressure that an employee should be on duty 24/7 is erroneous and a sure path to dissatisfaction and low morale for workers. Just because a manager works seven days a week doesn't mean that faithful employees should do the same.

#4 Don't Say – "You should stay here because we won't discriminate against you for being a woman". This insensitive remark was delivered to a female executive by her boss; an exemplary woman who had been the recent recipient of a Women in Technology award. She left this

thoughtless supervisor and is now embarking on a new career path after serving as a regional sales lead and general manager of one of the nation's largest telecomm firms. A great boss will never discriminate, and will never make an employee feel vulnerable, directly or indirectly, as the result of their gender, religious or political affiliation or race. Behavior such as this, if not illegal, is boorish.

#5 Don't Say – “We've got to cut costs” (at the same time the manager is buying a new desk). When times are difficult, employees respect supervisors who are empathetic to the challenges employees must face. They resent any leader who lives a different standard. In challenging times, managers should lead by example.

#6 Don't Say – “I don't want to listen to your complaints”. As a boss you should actively seek feedback, even negative comments. I suggest a leader listen with an open mind and fully consider an employee's issues. Even in the case of a problem that can't be helped, allowing an employee to vent for even a minute or two can go a long way toward building loyalty and high morale.

#7 Don't Say – “We've always done it this way”. This statement is a sure way to squash innovation. A better statement is to ask “What do you suggest we do to improve?” In all likelihood, employees do know what can and should be done to enhance any task. Our job as managers is to encourage workers to find creative solutions to age old problems and to reward them for their clear thinking.

#8 Don't Say – “You're doing a terrible job”. Managers need to communicate expectations clearly. They should give employees the resources, budgets, deadlines, training and support they need to complete an assignment with distinction. Managers should ask workers to repeat the instructions they receive to insure they fully understand the assigned tasks. If employees make repeated mistakes, perhaps the task doesn't match the employee's competency or they have been given unclear instructions.

#9 Don't Say - “You're stupid, the worst (expletive) worker ever”. Anger, profanity and belittling are a spear through an employee's heart. Bosses should behave with civility and professionalism. A fellow *Forbes* columnist noted recently that while it is inadvisable for a boss to swear in front of an employee, it is absolutely unacceptable to swear *at* an employee.

In summary, a great manager should keep his or her word and strive to set a good example. A good boss will praise in public and if a constructive reprimand is necessary, provide it sparingly, privately, and with benevolence. Allowing failure is a key of true delegation. Lessons are learned from missed goals. Learn to listen, and when employees provide feedback, do your best to consider their thoughts with an open mind. If leaders follow these points, they will experience loyal and engaged employees who truly enjoy their assignments and contribute to the well being of the organization.

Are there other statements you would like to add to this list? If so, you can reach me at @AskAlanEHall. Thanks for reading.

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