

Bosses Who Refuse to Embrace Technology Lose Talent -- Especially Millennials. It's that Simple.



You can send your workplace questions to Stephen at: StephenSays@bellow.press.

Questions selected to be answered, will appear in this column. Please use the Subject: Stephen Says for all emails. Stephen Viscusi is a bestselling author, television personality, and CEO of The Viscusi Group, global executive recruiters located in New York. Follow Stephen on Twitter @WorkplaceGuru, Like Stephen on Facebook; and follow him on LinkedIn.

Dear Stephen:

I've had it with my boss. I was hired in the interiors department at a small architectural firm about 18 months ago, straight out of college. At the time of my hiring, they told me they were looking to bring in people who were tech savvy in an attempt to get a leg up on the competition and expand into branding. It was a medium-sized department, and I was promised a lot of work. Sounds great, right?

I was thrilled with the opportunity. Unfortunately, they didn't think through the plan as well as they should have. My direct superior is not as onboard with it as the rest of the company seems

to be. It isn't a matter of age, either, because this guy is pretty young — and much younger than the department head who is a tech expert and was driving this transformation. My boss just doesn't want to learn how to use these new programs.

As you can imagine, all of this is incredibly irritating, but the real issue is I end up having to do all the work on the larger projects because he simply can't use the programs we're expected to use. I like having the chance to do this work, but it's very frustrating to see my boss get the credit for every one of our department's successes and then have him

yelling at me any time a customer is at all displeased. I think he knows how useless he is, and he loses it when anything goes wrong because he gets nervous the firm's principals will finally realize he's dead weight. He is not just dead weight, though, he is dead in the water and so are we if he continues to lead this department. If we just had a competent department head, who bought into the company's vision, this would be a dream job, and I'm hopeful that will happen soon, but I don't know what to do in the meantime. Please help! Do I report this guy?

Lost in Wonderland

Dear Lost in Wonderland,

Yikes. This is all too common and not just in our industry. Let me put on my workplace guru hat for a second to try to fill in some context.

There's been a lot of conversation over the last few years about the systemic shock brought about by increases in office technology and efficiency innovation. The central struggle is that new realities of workflow are incompatible with the way most offices have been run for decades.

I know many of my readers have seen what happens when these two styles collide. These changes have been happening across the board — in interior design and architecture firms, in digital marketing and branding departments and in sales. Someone told me his boss has him translate all of the new sales numbers into a system the company stopped using two years ago because he can't be bothered to learn a new system. Stories like this might be outliers, but I'm not so sure. Either way, there seems to be a clear problem with bosses who aren't willing to adjust to their new environs and learn new technology.

You do make an excellent point I want to emphasize: This is not an age issue. Often, older employers get a bad rap for being unwilling

to adopt new office innovations. In my experience, this is unfair and inaccurate. There are plenty of young, hip, millennial managers who are Luddites or otherwise can't be bothered to change the way they operate. Likewise, some of the most exciting and experimental offices are run by people who have been in the industry for decades and understand how beneficial new technology can be when it is properly implemented.

Ultimately, it's up to companies to ensure everyone is doing their job and receiving the support they need. When this doesn't happen, we get disgruntled employees, who feel like they are being held back and unfairly blamed for their boss's shortcomings.

As I see it, driven, competent workers have two options in this difficult situation.

The first is to wait it out. Trust that you are doing excellent work, and even if your department head doesn't know it, someone does. Hope the boss moves on and you get someone new and exciting. Of course, this is a risky tact. There is neither a guarantee anyone is noticing your work, nor can you be sure your boss will abdicate any time soon. Really, the only benefit to this route is it's safe. If you're the person who

just keeps on pushing, this might be your road. Show up every day with your fingers crossed today will be the day your boss doesn't show up. I will caution I think these types of bosses are well-versed at flying under the radar, so I think most employees are wasting their time following this route, but I had to mention it.

For those who prefer to take matters into your own hands, you might want to consider filing an anonymous complaint with HR — those hotlines aren't just for sexual harassment, you know. It's unlikely a small or medium firm has this sort of reporting system, but it's worth exploring. Whether or not you can report this boss, start looking for a new job. There are so many companies today that want to hire talented workers you shouldn't have too much trouble finding a landing spot — specifically at some of the bigger companies. You should know what you're getting yourself into, though. Most people learn the hard way no job is perfect. I've never let that dissuade me from trying to find the perfect job, and I don't think it should dissuade you, either. Like I always say, the best time to look is when you do not have to. And guess what else? The best time to look is at the end of the year!

Stephen