

Top 10 Signs of a Bad Supervisor

Everyone has had to work for a bad supervisor at one point or another. The fire service is no exception. Some people mistake leadership for supervisory or management positions. Anyone who supervises another employee is a supervisor, but that doesn't make that person a leader. A leader is someone who positively influences others to want to follow. A good supervisor should also be a good leader. A bad supervisor is someone who usually lacks leadership skills, ability, or training. They might think they are doing a great job, but everyone around them knows they stink at it! Below are the top 10 signs of a bad supervisor:

1) **Bad Supervisors Lead and Manage by Intimidation**

These types of supervisors tend to use force and threats to get things done. They try to intimidate others with their tone of voice, body language, and harsh words. They are abrasive, harsh, and severe.

2) **Bad Supervisors Do Not Produce Results**

They often talk about what needs to be done, complain about what's not getting done, and demand that someone else do it. They rarely ever produce real results themselves and they lack initiative in getting things accomplished.

3) **Bad Supervisors Lack Honesty and Integrity**

Character is a vital part of being a great leader, and this is a non-negotiable leadership principle that has been around since the beginning of time. Bad supervisors are dishonest and tend to make unethical decisions. They justify these decisions with excuses like "Everyone else does it," or "No one is going to know" or "It won't hurt anyone."

4) **Bad Supervisors Do Not Learn From Mistakes**

They rarely ever admit they are wrong and their subordinates would faint and fall over if the words "I'm sorry" were ever uttered from their mouths! Bad supervisors tend to deny their mistakes, making it impossible to learn from those mistakes and become better as a leader or supervisor. As a result, there is a lack of respect among followers.

5) **Bad Supervisors Lack Openness to New Ideas or Suggestions**

These supervisors do not want suggestions or input from others. They take any form of suggestion or input as negative criticism instead of positive ideas. They say things like "If it's not broke, don't fix it" or "That's the way we've always done it around here" or "We've tried that before and it didn't work."

6) **Bad Supervisors Become Threatened by People Who Pursue Learning and Self-Development**

Real leaders support their followers in pursuing continual learning and self-development. Bad supervisors become threatened by subordinates who might get a higher education than the supervisor or who might attend some leadership training that the supervisor doesn't want to attend. As a result, the bad supervisor will often put down college degrees or leadership classes, or any form of continuing education.

7) **Bad Supervisors Criticize Others**

When a supervisor is insecure, they tend to overcompensate by putting other people down, especially in public. They tend to talk down to people to make themselves appear more powerful. They find things to criticize about anyone who is getting positive attention. When they need to reprimand a subordinate, they will often do it in front of other people because they think it makes them look powerful. If they only knew how horrible it makes them look!

8) **Bad Supervisors Do Not Make Themselves Accountable Up or Down the Chain**

A bad supervisor will make decisions without thinking about the consequences or how the decisions might affect others. Additionally, there is no accountability, especially down the chain. Bad supervisors say things like "I'm the boss—I don't owe an explanation to THEM!" or "If they don't like it, too bad." Real leaders understand that they are accountable to their followers as well as their supervisors to make principle-based decisions.

9) **Bad Supervisors Exhibit Poor Communication Skills**

Too many people think communicating is talking. Well it is, but it's also listening. The reason God gave you two ears and only one mouth was so you would learn to listen twice as much as you talked! Bad supervisors spew their thoughts and opinions on others without really listening to what others want to say. If they do shut up long enough to listen, they are not *really* listening... they are formulating their response or argument in their head. They often interrupt or interject when people are trying to talk, and they don't take the time to validate others in the communication process.

10) **Bad Supervisors Exhibit High Confidence but Low Competence**

This is by far the worst type of supervisor. They tend to show a very high level of confidence but they have a very low level of competence. Subordinates find it very difficult to follow this type of supervisor. The supervisor comes off as a cocky, arrogant, know-it-all, but everyone around that person knows they are full of crap. Unfortunately, the only one who doesn't know it is the supervisor, which amplifies their incompetence. Since we now have syndromes for just about everything, I call this one the HCLC syndrome (high confidence/low competence). Don't be one of the supervisors who end up dubbed with this syndrome!

It takes a lot to be considered a great leader. There are actions and behaviors you must exhibit on a daily basis. If you are exhibiting any of the actions above, chances are, people will find it very difficult to follow you. If you want to find out how good of a leader you really are, take my Leadership Assessment. It's online and it's free. Just log on to: www.FirePresentations.com/FreeInfo.htm.

Kimberly Alyn is a best-selling author and a professional speaker and trainer. She is the owner of Fire Presentations (www.FirePresentations.com), a company dedicated to training workshops for the fire service. Kim offers instruction on leadership, conflict prevention and resolution, discipline in the fire service, promotional process, command presence, communication skills, presentations skills, writing skills, and sexual harassment. Kim is the author of eight books and five CD/DVD productions. She holds a bachelors degree in management and a masters degree in organizational management. Kim can be reached at: 800-821-8116 or email: Kim@FirePresentations.com.