



# a union guide to Surviving a Hostile Supervisor

The best supervisors can turn the toughest job into a joy by showing how much they value your skills and helping you to improve them. The worst kind is the Nasty Piece Of Work. They can make the easiest job a daily misery, as they sap your enthusiasm, rob your self-confidence, sabotage your work, and chip away at your sanity. Stuck with an NPOW? Follow these steps.

- 1** **Join the union.** Bullies only understand power, and nothing beats the power of workers when we stick together!
- 2** **Trust your gut.** NPOWs will try to make you doubt your own sense of what's really going on. Don't fall for it.  
**3** **Document everything.** Keep a spreadsheet or notepad that tracks and briefly summarizes *all* supervisor interactions. *Do not abandon it* even when things seem better.
- 4** **Keep someone else in the loop.** As soon as you suspect a pattern of hostile or unfair treatment, tell a trusted coworker and keep them up to speed. Keeping it secret will *always work against you*.  
**5** **Make your own receipts.** Clever NPOWs save their worst for face-to-face interactions. Always send the NPOW a follow-up email recapping the interaction. Ask the NPOW to confirm or correct your summary. Don't worry if there is no reply.
- 6** **No such thing as "safe feedback."** If the NPOW assures you it's safe to give honest feedback, you must assume it's a trap. Do not walk into it.
- 7** **Careless talk costs jobs.** When the NPOW's questions start to sound like a fishing expedition or a Law & Order episode, stop and ask for a steward.\*
- 8** **Respond, respond, respond.** You have to right to include a written response alongside any negative content being added to your personnel file.  
**9** **Keep your cool.** NPOWs may try to throw you off-balance or push buttons. Don't give them the satisfaction. A sharp response may be appropriate, but leave it to a steward.
- 10** **Tell the union.** HR & EAP are not your friends. They exist to protect management's interests and minimize legal risk exposure. They would sooner find a new worker than a new supervisor. If HR contact is appropriate, a union rep will handle it.

\*Say something like...

"IF THIS DISCUSSION COULD IN ANY WAY LEAD TO DISCIPLINE, TERMINATION, OR AFFECT MY PERSONAL WORKING CONDITIONS, I REQUEST THE PRESENCE OF A UNION REPRESENTATIVE. UNTIL ONE IS PRESENT, I CHOOSE NOT TO ANSWER ANY QUESTIONS."

...then text (802) 391-0123 and let us know you need a steward!