

Why Your Boss Isn't the Problem



I left a job once.

Like all, I believed the boss to be the reason for leaving the job.

Yes, the boss exercised control.
I didn't have leeway to make concessions to other units.

Yes, the workplace was toxic.
We were constantly fighting with other departments.

Yes, my job (as a senior manager) had become like an Intermediary. I was just passing what was coming from the top, down the line.

I felt suffocated and not making any worthwhile contribution.

So, I left.

I considered the boss to be the reason for my leaving.

Years later, I realized, the boss was surface-level reason.

The real reason was:

- I wanted 'Independence'.
- I believed in 'Cooperation'.
- I valued 'Meaning'.

Those were my 'Values', what I valued.

And what did the boss want / Value?

- Boss valued 'Control'.
- Boss felt we, the BPO (Business Process Outsourcing) unit, should take on work from the principal (the Bank) only if we were 'Adding Value' to the task.
- Boss wanted us to be 'Agile'.
- Boss felt 'Done is better than Perfection'.

Our Values — what each of us valued — clashed.

If I had seen it like this i.e. a clash of values, boss's Vs. mine, I wouldn't have considered the boss to be the reason for leaving.

I wouldn't have let the story in my head spiral.

I would have talked to him and shared my concerns.

I would have made adjustments in how I read situations.

Not everyone in our unit left the job.

Rarely anyone, in fact.

Some adapted.

Some sought a transfer.

Some had different Values hierarchy.

Years later, as part of my research, I did a Values test, for myself and an ex-colleague.

My need for 'Independence' came at 82/100 and for the ex-colleague, it came at 59/100.

No wonder he thrived, while I felt suffocated in that department.

It took me some time to realize this.

“As long as the boss is not manipulative or targeting you specifically, you can be rest assured that he or she is simply acting in accordance with their values.”

The next time, you feel - the boss, the salary, the workplace is the problem. Evaluate what exactly is bothering you?

- Maybe the Boss is a proxy for not having Independence.
- Maybe the Salary is a proxy for not feeling Respected.
- Maybe the Toxic Culture is a mismatch between your value of Cooperation and your department’s value of Competitiveness.

For sure, there could be more reasons behind your dissatisfaction, like, wanting a work-life balance, better opportunity, personal development, etc.

Whatever it is, it is something that You ‘Value’, the absence of which is creating discontent in you.

Our Values are more than generic things like Equality, Diversity, etc.

As per Mindtools (dot) com:

“Your values are the things that you believe are important in the way you live and work. They (should) determine your priorities, and, deep down, they’re probably the measures you use to tell if your life is turning out the way you want it to.”

It is specific and unique to us.

‘Values’ might seem an opaque word.

There are specific ways to find your Values.

For now, if you just start writing in your diary – Why I am frustrated at work? And further ask - Why? Why? - it will help you to understand what is bothering you, and what really matters to you.

The answers you reach are your Values.

As your awareness of your Values grows, you'll find yourself rising above - difficult situations, colleagues, and bosses.

You will view them, not as problem per-se, but rather as a disconnect between what you believe in and what the counterpart believes in.

You will view them as challenges to be managed with logic and understanding.

This awareness will help you to adapt to different types of bosses, while simultaneously feeling fulfilled.

For more practical tips, explore my eBook: '28 Management Tips: There Is a Better Way to Do Everyday Work Situations.' Visit www.anilkaramchandani.com to learn more.