

What not to do when the boss asks you to join him for a drink

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Ok, I am just saying upfront that I have been dreading having to write this article. Unintentionally but foolishly I have committed a dreadful error in even suggesting the article. Let's get straight to it.

I made the vomit-making assumption that the boss was a him. Yes, I am male and that is exactly the kind of crass unthinking stuff we can often be guilty of. Just saying. Owning up. Whatever.

It gets worse.

My boss is a woman. My editor is a woman.

The boss person that tries to make sure I don't make an idiot of myself and write bad copy. You can be the judge of that for yourself, but I know with every deleted semi-colon or hyphen that I am in the presence of a vastly superior intellect.

Ok so let's get to the point of what this article is supposed to be about. We'll start by throwing the elephant in the room out the door. This is not a gender issue. This is a getting ahead issue.

Lesson 1

Why did they ask you out in the first place?

I'm going to have to use a bit of an anecdote on this one. Someone who had hired me only a couple of months before asked me to meet him at lunch. Being full of bonhomie I told a couple of the other guys to join us for a beer. Don't ever do this. He wanted to tell me why I needed to pull my socks up, why he was feeling disappointed in me and what he wanted me to do about it. Last thing he needed was a clown. A clown sadly is what I was, and if I had understood why he had asked me to meet him I could have saved both of us friction and both of us valuable time. As it was, I let down my boss and I let down myself.

Thankfully, many months later, I was able to shake his hand as he left for a different role in a different country.

Lesson 2

Listen but don't talk.

When your boss asks you to meet him (or her) they really didn't ask you because they wanted your opinion. They asked you because they wanted to talk to you. Mostly probably because they want you to do something differently or, they both. Just listening and not talking could salvage your career path or at the very least give you a better sense of where you stand. There's another thing here. Bosses respect and like people who will listen to them. And generally, that's not because they love the sound of their own voice. They appreciate, as we all do, that their opinion is important and has meaning.

Lesson 3

Don't say no.

Yes, it sounds super obvious and even maybe stupidly, simplistic but the truth is that maybe your boss actually respects you and wants to try and get on with you better. Ditch the fear factor – if the boss wanted you gone, you would already be gone. Go meet him or her. Don't be arrogant. Don't be insecure. Be honest about your expectations and desires. If he or she is

taking valuable time to talk to you, take them at face value. The greatest gift you can get from your boss is the knowledge they have accumulated in your chosen profession. Use it.

Lesson 4

Don't tell anyone.

The sit down with the boss chat is no one else's business. Your mum doesn't need to know, your dad doesn't need to know. Your girlfriend doesn't need to know. Why? Because they will just give you well-intentioned really bad advice. They don't know your boss. You do. We all want to tell our folks, our family what's going on in our lives, it's only natural, but we can all choose the time and the place to do that. Your boss doesn't know your mum or your dad, he or she just wants a chat with you.

Lesson 5

Don't disclose.

Whether you just got told you were useless, whether you just got told you were brilliant, say nothing. To anyone. Our lives, our careers have a strange way of interlinking throughout our lives. By saying little we often end up saying more about ourselves. To try and explain that a little bit better, I may have to throw in another little anecdote. A boss of mine once told me I was rubbish. I said nothing. Two years later he was working for me.