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## FIRM MANAGEMENT

# Unhappy at Work? How to Tell Your Boss —And Not Get Fired

Employers don't want to lose dedicated workers, so don't remain silent. If you have an issue at work, speak up.

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Even if you love what you do, there will always be times when you're less than satisfied with some aspect of your job. If you are unhappy at work, you are not alone. According to Gallup's *State of the Workplace 2022 Report*, 19% of employees report being miserable at work, and 60% report feeling detached from their roles and responsibilities.

Many workers never disclose their issues and end up leaving or being let go when burnout affects their ability to get work done. But here's the thing: Employers don't want to lose dedicated workers, so don't remain silent. If you have an issue at work, speak up.

Of course, speaking up is often easier said than done. Fortunately, there are steps you can take to make this conversation seamless. Here's how to tell your boss you're unhappy in your current role, without getting fired.

## **Why you should share with your boss**

Many workers ask themselves, "Is it really OK to tell my boss I'm feeling burnt out?" The answer: Yes! It is completely OK to tell your boss that you're burnt out or that something isn't working for you at work. In fact, if you're not happy in your position, the best thing you can do is talk to your manager.

After all, companies should want their employees to enjoy what they do. Not only does job satisfaction keep great workers onboard, but companies with higher worker satisfaction typically outperform other companies, according to the aforementioned Gallup poll. Talking to your boss about your job satisfaction—or lack thereof—is best for both you and for your company.

## **When to talk with your boss**

Timing is everything. Telling your boss or manager you're unhappy isn't an easy way to start a conversation, so it's usually best to avoid busy or high-volume days. Having a productive discussion over a difficult topic will be easier when your boss is less stressed.

Find a time to talk when there isn't too much on your boss' plate, and make an appointment if possible. Giving your boss a heads-up will help them prepare to process information that might not be comfortable to digest.

# What to say

Before you tell your boss your negative feelings, you need to make a plan. Planning what you will say will help you stay focused on the key issues and prevent you from potentially saying something out of emotion. You want to be clear of mind and level-headed when you have this tough conversation.

Here is how to effectively communicate with your boss.

## 1. Write down your talking points

Write down what you want to say and the potential answers you might receive. This way, you are prepared to respond no matter what your boss says. You don't need to write an entire script, but a few bullet points can help you stay on track.

## 2. Stay calm

Remain calm so you can express your emotions in a healthy way to your boss. Don't let your nerves, frustration, or melancholy get the best of you. Feel free to verbalize your emotions, but try not to put them on display. Keep an eye on your body posturing so that you don't come across as aggressive or upset. Stay positive and be open to what your boss has to say.

## 3. Explain why you're no longer happy in the position

Calmly explain to your boss why you're unhappy in your current role. State your main talking points clearly and respectfully without blaming anyone. However, you do want to be as specific as possible in order to detail what is preventing you from performing at your best.

For example, if you're a contract worker whose invoices are often paid late, you might say, "I don't like how I'm being paid." This isn't very specific and puts the burden on your boss to read between the lines.

Instead, tell your boss that the current invoicing system results in you getting paid late regularly and that you would like to start using a new system to help you get paid on time. Include examples to back up your claims, and address your issues head on. For instance, one report found that approximately 22% of all digital invoices were overdue.

## 4. Offer a solution

Focusing only on negatives isn't very productive. Try to balance out your frustrations by also voicing any solutions you think will be effective. This shows your boss that you aren't depending on them to fix your problems, but that you want to be a part of the solution. Put your problem-solving skills front and center and have some valuable solutions in mind before you talk to your boss.

## **5. Listen**

After you tell your boss what you're going through and why you're no longer happy at work, it's time to listen. Your manager will likely have questions, explanations, and maybe even some solutions of their own to offer you at the end of your conversation. If they don't have much to say, prompt them by asking if they have any ideas to share. After the conversation is over, show them you were listening by implementing the fixes you discussed.

## **What's next?**

If your job satisfaction doesn't improve, or your manager doesn't offer any solutions, it might be time to move on. Start looking for other positions or consider transition into self-employment or freelancing. Last year, there were nearly 60 million Americans who were working as freelancers either full- or part-time, and that number is only continuing to grow. The point is you don't have to be stuck in a position that doesn't make you happy, because there are many opportunities out there.

In any case, thank your boss in the days following your meeting and let them know you appreciate their willingness to listen. Even if you don't end up staying, you'll likely leave a positive impression on management that they can pass along in the form of recommendations in the future.

Ultimately, if you're not happy at work, it's important to let your boss know.

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