

## 10 common phrases that turn employees against you

Managers are human. You're bound to make some unfortunate word choices now and then. But employees will give you a pass on those annoying expressions for only so long.

You've been promoted... so now what?

Spew these 10 phrases at your peril:

1. **"That's above my pay grade."** You have essentially told an employee that you not only can't solve his or her problem, but you're afraid to poke anyone higher on the totem pole for a solution.
2. **"Hold that thought."** OK. For how long? Later today? Tomorrow? Or until I forget about it? If an employee has a thought (be thankful they do), hear it out. "Hold that thought" is code for "I'm not interested in what you are about to say."
3. **"Because I pay your salary."** Unless you own the company, no you don't. Odds are you are on the payroll too. Such a statement is usually uttered by a boss who either can't articulate a sound reason for issuing an assignment or is simply intoxicated by the sheer power of the words.
4. **"I'm really busy right now."** Of course you are. But find out what he or she wants. Maybe it can be addressed in minutes. If not, schedule a time when the worker can come back. Employees are your top resource; they don't deserve a quick brush-off.
5. **"I need it yesterday."** The cliché is demeaning to the employee who's seeking a serious, meaningful deadline. If something is urgent, say so with a brief explanation why.
6. **"Great job! Great job!"** This is fine if it's sincere and used sparingly when it's really warranted. Overuse of this T-Ball-field praise dilutes its effectiveness.
7. **"I only took \_\_ days off last year."** A boss who says this is either inviting everyone to a pity party or elevating his own work ethic above theirs. Either way, employees don't want to hear about your woes, especially if you're not willing to listen to theirs.
8. **"Why did this mistake happen?"** This question works if it's directed squarely at the system, not the people in it. Otherwise, it could look like you're seeking out a scapegoat.
9. **"I don't believe in giving employees a perfect score."** This performance review downer is a great way to convey that there's no point in truly excelling. It's a misguided motivational technique that will only serve to champion mediocrity.
10. **"Let me know if you need help."** Again, in itself, these words are just fine—even commendable. But tone is everything: When they're just empty verbal punctuation ending a sentence, they essentially mean "Good luck, don't bother me with this anymore." Instead, stop by later and offer help independently and sincerely.