

2 OF 5 BOSSES DON'T KEEP THEIR WORD

By Brent Kallestad, Associated Press Writer (January, 2007)

For most people, it's back to work Tuesday after a holiday weekend with family and friends. And for many, a new study shows¹, it will be under a bad boss. Nearly two of five bosses don't keep their word, and more than a fourth bad-mouth those they supervise to co-workers, the Florida State University study shows.

And those all-too-common poor managers create plenty of problems for companies as well, leading to poor morale, less production and higher turnover. "They say that employees don't leave their job or company, they leave their boss," said Wayne Hochwarter, an associate professor of management in the College of Business at Florida State University, who joined with two doctoral students at the school to survey more than 700 people working in a variety of jobs about how their bosses treat them. "No abuse should be taken lightly, especially in situations where it becomes a criminal act," said Hochwarter.

Employees stuck in an abusive relationship experienced more exhaustion, job tension, nervousness, depressed moods and mistrust, the researchers found. They found that a good working environment is often more important than pay, and that it's no coincidence that poor morale leads to lower production. "They (employees) were less likely to take on additional tasks, such as working longer or on weekends, and were generally less satisfied with their job," the study found. "Also, employees were more likely to leave if involved in an abusive relationship than if dissatisfied with pay."

The findings of the study include the following results:

- 39 percent of workers said their supervisor failed to keep promises.
- 37 percent said their supervisor failed to give credit when due.
- 31 percent said their supervisor gave them the "silent treatment" in the past year.
- 27 percent said their supervisor made negative comments about them to other employees or managers.
- 24 percent said their supervisor invaded their privacy.
- 23 percent said their supervisor blamed others to cover up mistakes or to minimize embarrassment.

Workers in bad situations should remain optimistic, Hochwarter said. "It is important to stay positive, even when you get irritated or discouraged, because few subordinate-supervisor relationships last forever," he said. "You want the next boss to know what you can do for the company."

And workers should know where to turn if they feel threatened, harassed or discriminated against, whether it is the company's grievance committee or finding formal representation outside the employer. "Others know who the bullies are at work," Hochwarter said. "They likely have a history of mistreating others." Hochwarter also recommended some methods to minimize the harm caused by an abusive supervisor. "The first is to stay visible at work," he said. "Hiding can be detrimental to your career, especially when it keeps others in the company from noticing your talent and contributions."

The survey was conducted by mail. Workers surveyed included men and women of various ages and races in the service industry and manufacturing, from companies large and small.

¹ *Leadership Quarterly*, Fall, 2007.