

Working in a Hostile Environment

5 ways to improve a bad situation

Published on June 25, 2013 by [Bernardo Tirado, PMP](#) in [Digital Leaders](#)

From finger pointing to co-workers that [bully](#), we all have experienced, at one point or another, working in a hostile [environment](#). The question is: what do you do about it? Some folks would say “find another job” while others say “fight back”. Irrespective of which route you choose, a hostile environment is emotionally draining.

Here are 5 tips on making the best out of a bad situation.

1. Document, document, document...

Many times I’ve come across people who have selective [memory](#) and, for one reason or another, like to call you out in public for a mistake *they’ve* made. To combat this type of situation, your best bet is to be on the offense and make sure you document all conversations with meeting minutes or recap notes. It’s really up to you whether you choose to respond back in public or one to one, but at the very least, you will have documentation on what was actually discussed and agreed on.

2. Disempowering a bully...

Bullies at work get a kick out of humiliating you. They thrive on power. So the next time you feel that you are being bullied, simply say “Do you need a moment?” Keep repeating yourself until the person stops talking. The person will eventually say, “What are you talking about?” and your response should be “Well, it seems like you’re getting all worked up and perhaps you need a moment to recompose yourself”. Although this seems simple, what you have done is completely throw the bully off guard. Think of it as shooting a stun gun—your words being electric shocks shocking their system.

3. Feeling good about what you do...

Finding a silver lining in a dark cloud can be very difficult, but it’s possible. Focus on something good about what you’re doing at work, such as [coaching](#) a peer or having a great relationship with your client. Find something you are doing that makes you proud, and focus on that. I’m not saying it will be easy, but studies have shown that when you start thinking positively about a situation, the less of an impact negative actions will have on you.

4. Your time is sacred...

Unless you are an emergency room doctor who needs to be on call overnight or is someone who makes a significant amount of money where you get paid to work 24/7, there is no reason why you should be checking your blackberry or any other communication device to access work emails at all hours of the night or weekend. Your time is sacred and you should manage it as such. Take the time to do something relaxing and don’t think about work. Being in a state of relaxation will help you stay calm and will minimize any impact a hostile environment would have on you.

5. Start networking...

Your goal is to get back control of your work situation. Do so, by updating your resume and on your terms, find an environment that is more conducive to the type of environment you want to be in. I’m not suggesting that leaving is the best option but there will come a time where you will just get fed up and depending on your financial situation, you may just give up and quit. Avoid getting to this point by [networking](#) and getting ahead of your situation.