

PROFANITY AT THE WORKPLACE: A VERBAL SLAP BY THE EMPLOYEE BESEECHING HEAR ME, RESPECT ME



Three out of four employees says that the one thing that they detest the most about their jobs is their bosses. Most take out their frustration in the privacy of their offices and really wish that they could throw that resignation letter on his face and ask him to put it, you know where. Whilst it is okay to take out your frustrations, the use of vulgar language at the work place, career-strategist say is a definite no-no. But is it really so? There are times when it could actually work in your favor. Michelle McQuaid, an internationally acclaimed positive psychologist had an experience to the contrary. When she could take no more from a domineering boss, she let him have it and asked him to go f***k himself, which eventually became the title of a book she authored, where she gives reasons why and when it is okay to swear at the workplace. Astoundingly she was not only not fired but also got a raise. How did she manage that and would we be able to do get away with it? Should we condone swearing at work? McQuaid recollects the time when the F word escaped her lips. "It was a deathly silence during which I dared not blink or look away. It was the final boiling point of months of demeaning verbal abuse," she remembered. She thought that she had shot herself in the foot and that the boss was about to give her the marching orders. Amazingly however, the corners of the boss's lips curled up in a smile, he laughed and said, "Fair enough I guess. Fair enough." She says that swearing can actually be a stress buster, a source of pain relief. If not coarse, subtle profanity laced with humor, can actually shock our brains into become more tolerant and acceptance of other people's views and opinions. A recent CareerBuilder survey said that 64 percent of Americans do not have high opinions of people who swear. 57 percent say that they would never promote an employee who uses profanity. Opinions are divided. On the face of it profanity is uncivil and people who indulge it are typically termed as uncouth and rude and it is reflective of a lack of good manners. However, McQuaid says that not all foul-mouthed people are foul. They may have been provoked to the end of their tethers and the swearing is an involuntary, unscripted outpouring of frustration that has been building up since long. What is required that instead of damning the speaker, understand the reason for his outburst and comprehend what he is really trying to say. When an employee uses profanity, he uses it as a last desperate measure, his ultimate appeal to be heard. He says, respect me. You may be the boss, but that does not give you the right to belittle me, demean me. It means that the employee is saying, okay this is enough, beyond this I am not going to take it. It is like he is setting boundaries which he is telling the boss in no uncertain terms, that he must not trespass. An intelligent boss will take profanity personally but use it to win back the employee's confidence and help create a situation where the employee will get back to work happy and contended that his voice was heard. McQuaid says that instead of keeping pent up emotions festering inside, it is better to use the occasional profanity at the workplace to release the pressure.