

7 Things CEOs Hate

Written by Molly Gamble ([Twitter](#) | [Google+](#)) | July 23, 2014

A few behaviors and actions senior leaders may want to avoid in the C-suite.

An article in [Forbes](#) lays out seven behaviors that anger CEOs most. *Forbes* contributor Stephen Meyer, CEO of Rapid Learning Institute, conducted an informal survey in which C-level executives labeled a series of behaviors as those that made their blood boil — the most severe — or that they really hated, hated or found annoying. Here are those items, beginning with the action that makes most CEOs' blood boil.

1. Withhold information to avoid conflict. "This was the winner by a mile," wrote Mr. Meyer — 63 percent of executives said they "really hate" this while 26 percent said it made their blood boil. CEOs are vulnerable because they rely on so many other people. Nothing is scarier to a CEO than the thought of making decisions without information that somebody possessed but failed to disclose. If CEOs frequently find themselves in a position where a key employee is withholding information from them, it may be time for them to ask whether there is something about the way they react to the truth that scares people. What is going on that is making it difficult for people to candidly discuss uncomfortable issues?

2. After a plan fails, suddenly announce you were against the effort "all along." This is bad enough among employees, but when senior leaders have this quality, "it's absolutely poisonous," said Mr. Meyer. Nearly half of the respondents said they "really hate" this behavior and it also earned the highest "makes my blood boil" score among all the items. Mr. Meyer said leaders who declare they were against something all along after it fails may have a "weak will and a victim complex" — especially if such statements are followed by more like, "Nobody listens to me." CEOs don't want leaders who declare their own ineffectiveness.

3. Have a strong sense of entitlement. Fifteen percent of executives said this makes their blood boil. Mr. Meyer said this item can be avoided through more focused recruiting and onboarding, which can effectively screen out people who feel entitled. Although he points out a caveat: "If a run a union shop, there's only so much you can do."

4. Recommend a strategy with no data to support it. About four in 10 executives "really hate" this, but just as many find it merely annoying. Mr. Meyer is one of the latter. "Fact is, I'm better at telling other people to support their ideas than I am at supporting my own," he wrote.

5. Assume the CEO earned his or her position through luck or favoritism. Only 32 percent of CEOs said this makes their blood boil or they really hate it — most just found it annoying.

6. Tell the CEO how to run the business. About half of executives found this annoying, while 26 percent said they really hated it. Mr. Meyer shares some advice for job interviewees: "Don't ever, ever talk to a CEO as if you understand a business you don't understand. The CEO won't hate you for it. But I guarantee you won't get hired."

7. Assume the CEO is greedy. About 20 percent of executives said it makes them angry or they really hate it when people conclude they are greedy without understanding the risks they take. "I admire CEOs who take the high road on this one," wrote Mr. Meyer. "I took the low road and gave this a 'really hate' score. When I was younger, I was deeply idealistic, had no understanding of risk, and thought most business people were greedy bastards, which perhaps explains why today I am a little bit intolerant of people who are — ahem — exactly like I used to be."

More Articles on CEOs:

[The Hospital CEO's Ultimate Dashboard: What to Check Daily, Quarterly and Yearly](#)

[The CEO's Guide to Getting Fired](#)

[Notes From the Field: 7 Things to Know About Hospital CEO Searches](#)

© Copyright ASC COMMUNICATIONS 2012. Interested in LINKING to or REPRINTING this content? View our policies by [clicking here](#).