

Welcome to the twenty-ninth edition of Jennifer Selby Long's *Traveling Light*. Are you blessed with the talent and opportunity to lead? *Traveling Light* will skyrocket your impact and lighten the load in your life. It's based on the work of executive coach and management consultant Jennifer Selby Long. Copyright 2008 Jennifer Selby Long. All rights reserved.

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Five Signs You're in Poor Standing with Your Boss

You're probably in great standing with your boss, but with the economy so tight, many people have been telling me they're nervous about their jobs and they want to be sure they're picking up the signals, if there are any being sent.

Interestingly, this is one area in which I do not advise clients to listen to your "gut feelings" because I find that employees often fill in the empty blanks with the worst possible scenario when it really isn't so bad.

Instead, start by looking for the clues that you have fallen into poor standing with your boss:

1. You have less access than your peers. While their requests for time with the boss result in a meeting, yours are turned into an email thread or ignored.
2. Your boss begins to avoid eye contact. For some bosses, it's difficult to maintain eye contact for long when they know they need to have a difficult conversation with a subordinate. Some bosses don't make much eye contact in the first place, so what's important to notice here is not the *sheer* volume of eye contact, but rather the *relative* volume of eye contact. If it's less than it used to be, it's a sign.
3. You are no longer tapped for important projects. As with Sign #2, it's essential to look at this from a relative point of view. If your department isn't getting any essential projects, the department is the problem, and you'd best be looking to get out of there and go where the action is. However, if key projects are still coming in, but they are going to your peers, it's not a good sign.
4. Responses to your ideas take on a needlessly negative tone, with phrases such as, "You need to understand that I'm trying to run a business here," which implies that somehow you are oblivious to the fact that you work for a business.
5. Your boss tells you that you need to work on a few things. The odds of this happening outside of a mandatory annual performance review, sadly, are quite low.

I often see even the toughest of bosses shy away from direct feedback, so don't assume that you're getting it. If it's been a while since you've had a performance discussion with your boss, ask for one.

It's no guarantee that you'll get back in good standing, but it's better than letting the problem go, living with the endless stress, and either slipping into an unsatisfying role or losing your job altogether. In tough economic times, it is particularly important to show your willingness to take tough feedback and work hard to improve.

News

A special thanks to everyone who's requested that I write on an issue of particular importance to you. If you haven't seen your topic addressed, stay tuned. I will get to as many of them as possible.

As you read this, I'm attending a professional development seminar on internet marketing with my assistant, Janet Smith. With both of us out of the office, please forgive me if my replies to calls and emails are not quite as quick as usual. We're deep in a meeting room in sunny L.A., grateful for the learning, but also yearning to enjoy the sun!

While I paid for this seminar well in advance, I wouldn't hesitate to sign up and pay for it right now, in the middle of this terrible economy. One of the biggest mistakes I made during the last recession was to under-invest in my professional development.

Ironic, isn't it, considering that I'm in the professional development business? I'm reminded of the cobbler's children who have no shoes. I was relatively new to consulting, having re-entered the profession two years earlier during the heady days of the dot-com boom, when all any of us did was work, work, work. After the bubble burst, I was feeling my way and learning by trial and error, filled with uncertainty and scared to death.

As a result of my under-investment in professional development during that stressful time, I suffered from burn-out and even fell behind for a while on the latest developments in leadership and management. When I finally allowed myself to invest in my development again, I was like a woman coming out of the desert into an oasis, just gulping down the water and filled with happiness and relief.

Professional development is essential. If you can't swing the same investment in professional development that you had last year, focus your development and get creative to make sure you keep it going.

For reminders on how to do this at the organizational level, read my article, "The Five Best Ways to Improve Your Organization During a Recession" available at http://www.selbygroup.com/improve_your_organization.html and on my blog at <http://jenniferselbylong.com>.

The blog is a concentrated resource for all of my articles, book reviews, and news, organized by topic. It's now the fastest way to find an article from a past newsletter.

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