

## **Bullmore's responses**

### **Chapter 3. Employee perspective. Personality of achievements?**

Jeremy Bullmore responded as follows:

Not for the first time, I find myself sympathising with both points of view: yours and your employers'. So I'm pretty certain that this isn't a problem that lends itself to clear, confident and unhesitating advice (not that there seem to be many of those).

I doubt that your employers really do want you to be a completely different person, and I'm equally sure that you'd make a great mistake if you tried to become one. There are few sights more embarrassing (and few less convincing) than people consciously setting out to re-brand themselves.

So the last thing you should do is waltz into your office next Monday morning and spend the whole day pretending to be lively and outspoken. It will never come naturally to you: everyone will look at you as if you're demented; and by the following day, you'll be back in your shell feeling thoroughly demoralised and determined never to leave it again.

So forget the actual words 'lively' and 'outspoken' and try to work out what might lie behind them. My guess is that, through a perfectly respectable combination of modesty and vanity, you concentrate all your effort and interest on your own work and as a result you come across not merely as self-effacing but also rather unenterprising.

I'm not suggesting you should become loud and assertive, just spend a little more time thinking of how the work that you do fits in with the work of others: and what initiatives your company could usefully take in order to become more efficient and successful. Bring these thoughts quietly to the notice of your superiors — and I think you'll find that you'll soon be seen as promotion material while remaining true to your instincts.

### **Chapter 6. Performance imperative. Should I keep my door open?**

Jeremy Bullmore responded as follows:

It's a familiar problem, this, and in some ways it's one of the penalties of success. The simple, management-guru solution would obviously be for you to cut down on your number of direct reports. I'm sure there's a magic number somewhere that according to the textbooks is supposed to deliver optimal managerial efficiency and time-utilisation.

But in your case, availability is clearly a key part of your operating style and it seems to be appreciated. So I think what you should do is come absolutely clean with all your people. Tell them exactly what you've told me: unless you have some unencroachable time of your own, you'll have to change your way of working. Rather than operate an appointments-only system, you intend from now on to have red times and green times. You'll know which they should be and what proportion of the day they should occupy; but they must be widely understood and strictly stuck to.

At green times, everyone's as welcome as ever; at red times, it's crisis cases only. I think that should work for you. But please, as well, undertake a piece of ruthless self-examination. Satisfy yourself that you're not spending more time than you need with your people because it flatters your vanity to do so - and sets you apart from the other managers

### **Chapter 10. Performance imperative. How can I work for more than one boss?**

Jeremy Bullmore responded as follows:

Having a boss should be a two-way business. Someone to report to, yes; but also someone whose job is in part to look after you.

I've never felt the need to be absolutely rigid about the first bit: having more than one boss to report to may be a little untidy but it's often fun, and you'll certainly learn more. What's not at all good is what's happening to you: three different bosses, but not one who feels any personal sense of responsibility for you. And since your three bosses don't get on, they'll all be in open competition for your time, which is bound to lead to dissatisfaction all round.

So you must appeal above them or round them - through your HR department, if you have one - and make it clear that, while you don't in the least mind working for two or more people, you must, please, have a single person to whom you can look for guidance and help.

### **Chapter 13. Ethics. Should I earn more than my boss?**

Jeremy Bullmore responded as follows:

Here's another question of principle, and I think I'm going to suggest another sliding scale. I don't suppose you'll warm to this advice, and a lot of other people may disagree with it quite vehemently, but here goes. Performance-related pay formulae sound wonderfully objective and defensible. If a person contributes way above expectations to neatly measurable factors such as revenue or profit, why shouldn't he or she benefit by the agreed proportion? After all, the firm is better off as a result.

The trouble is: luck, chance and unforeseeable events. No formula can factor in every possible eventuality. When a CEO's bonus is based on share price and the company is then on the receiving end of a deeply unwelcome hostile bid, the share price will soar; and he has every contractual right to claim his millions. But the whole world knows, and he knows, too, that something's wrong. It is even possible that the company became vulnerable to this bid precisely because of a recognised weakness in leadership.

If he brings in the lawyers and insists on his rights, he'll probably win the day, but key management relationships will be poisoned forever. A principle has been honoured, but at considerable cost.

I've no idea how much sheer chance contributed to your stellar performance. You may well feel none. But it is most unlikely that your company expected that the performance-related element of your income that you negotiated would push your pay to such stratospheric heights. You may be right to suspect that your boss dislikes the prospect of anyone earning more than he does, but there are also quite respectable grounds for having pay scales roughly related to scales of responsibility.

You say the money is not the real issue. In that case, why not show yourself to be a person of real principle rather than one clinging to a legalistic formula in the name of principle - and sort it all out amicably with your boss? I'm prepared to bet that, in the longer term, you won't even suffer financially.