

IMPOSSIBLE TARGETS

MANAGING AN UNREASONABLE MANAGER

Nayaab Bajwa, Ted Rogers Leadership Centre

You just got hired at your first professional job in sales, and you are beyond ecstatic. Now you don't have to think about going to McDonald's every day to flip burgers. You go to the office on your first day, ready to do an amazing job. You have set a goal to climb the corporate ladder and earn a promotion within your first six months. You've got this!

A couple of hours into your first shift, you see your manager yelling at a fellow employee for misplacing a document. The manager is so furious she leaves the store for an hour and when she comes back, she heads straight to the employee's desk and says "Go home". Watching this, all of your confidence is broken. You're trying to focus on your work but are distracted by what is going on. Everyone around you has their head down.

During your break you are sitting beside that same manager. She is on the phone with Human Resources telling them how she is going to fire the employee in question tomorrow. Watching all this on your first day makes a strong negative impression on you. You are afraid to ask any questions because you don't want to get in trouble. You do your best to avoid that manager.

However, a few months later she pulls you aside and tells you that "although you are meeting the sales objective set by head office, I want you and everyone else here to hit a minimum of double that sales objective." She turns her back and walks away.

This is an unreasonable request because head office calculates the objective keeping in mind the volume of customers coming in. The only possible way for you to achieve this goal is to do as your co-workers do, which is to be very aggressive with every customer. This means pushing customers and using every negotiation strategy you know to ensure they buy the product you are selling.

You know that this is the only way you can meet this target, and if you don't you are probably going to get fired in a very shameful and public way. You've seen it happen before. Being someone who is not necessarily pushy or forceful you don't feel comfortable doing this. So, you try making the sales without forcing or deceiving people. This doesn't work too well as it obviously isn't as effective as the hard-sell techniques used by your co-workers. As a result, your manager, on multiple occasions, tries to shame you into forcing those sales. You are feeling a lot of distress and you dread going to work every morning. Maybe it is better to leave before you are fired.

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What do you do?

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