



## Tool 10-1. Who's the Jerk at Work?

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Based on Chapter 10, “Engaging and Retaining Talented People in Any Economy,” in *The ASTD Leadership Handbook*, edited by Elaine Biech, © 2010 ASTD

**Purpose:** Use this self-assessment to measure your negative leadership behavior.

We asked dozens of people, “What do jerks act or look like?” (The book and movie *The Devil Wears Prada* certainly portrayed some of the worst of these behaviors, but our research found many more.) This checklist reflects what we heard. We dare you to score yourself.

### Behavior Checklist

**Instructions:** Score yourself on the following behaviors, using a 0-5 scale: 0 means you never act this way, and 5 means you often act this way.

Behavior	Rating (0-5)
Intimidate	
Condescend or demean	
Act arrogant	
Withhold praise	
Slam doors, pound tables	
Swear	
Behave rudely	
Belittle people in front of others	
Micromanage	
Manage up, not down	
Always look out for number one	
Give mostly negative feedback	
Yell at people	
Tell lies or “half-truths”	
Act above the rules	
Enjoy making people sweat	
Act superior to or smarter than everyone else	
Show disrespect	
Act sexist	
Act bigoted	
Withhold critical information	
Use inappropriate humor	
Blow up in meetings	

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<b>Behavior</b>	<b>Rating (0-5)</b>
Start every sentence with “I”	
Steal credit or the spotlight from others	
Block career moves (prevent promotion or hold onto “stars”)	
Distrust most people	
Show favoritism	
Humiliate and embarrass others	
Criticize often (at a personal level)	
Overuse sarcasm	
Deliberately ignore or isolate some people	
Set impossible goals or deadlines	
Never accept blame, let others take the hit	
Undermine authority	
Show lack of caring for people	
Betray trust or confidences	
Gossip or spread rumors	
Act as if others are stupid	
Have “sloppy moods” (when feeling down, take it out on others)	
Use fear as a motivator	
Show revenge	
Interrupt constantly	
Make “bad-taste” remarks	
Fail to listen	
Lack patience	
Demand perfection	
Break promises	
Second guess constantly	
Have to always be in control	
<b>TOTAL</b>	

**Note:** This assessment is a tool to help give you some insight, not a validated instrument. To learn more about these behaviors, check out our Jerk Survey at [www.keepem.com](http://www.keepem.com). The following interpretation guidelines are just that—guidelines.

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## Interpretation Guidelines

- 0-20            Although you have a bad day now and then, you are probably not viewed as a jerk. Watch those behaviors for which you scored above a 3, and get more feedback from your employees.
- 21-60           Look out! You could be viewed as a jerk by some, at least in some situations. Commit to identifying and working on your jerk-like behaviors.
- 61 or more     You are at high risk for losing talent. Get more feedback and get some help (maybe a coach).

If you checked none of the behaviors on this assessment, either you're a saint, or you have a few blind spots. In other words, most of us do exhibit some of these behaviors some of the time. The question is, how many and how often? And what effect does your behavior have on the people who report to you? Often, leaders are the last to know that their style is off putting. Watch for drops in productivity, difficulty hiring, lateral moves out of your department, and of course turnover.

If you believe (or find out) that you often exhibit jerk-like behaviors, decide to change. This might just be the most important action you can take to keep your talent on your team.