

America's most unwanted bosses

If you're gearing up for a new job search, there's a list that could potentially save you years of aggravation.

EBossWatch.com, the workplace watchdog site that encourages disgruntled employees to anonymously rate their supervi-

THE WORKING STIFF Darren Garnick

sors, just ranked America's 100 Worst Bosses of 2010. Relying on court records and media reports, the Web site compiles a database of sexual harassment and workplace bullying cases for job applicants to keep on their radar.

Massachusetts hit the charts three times — four if you include a celebrated hometown actor:

■ Brookline dentist Nelson Wood (No. 22) was accused of repeatedly spanking one of his female employees on the buttocks.

■ Lynn restaurant owner Dionisios Linardos (No. 23) allegedly threatened to withhold an employee's paycheck unless she had sex with him, stating "no honey, no money."

■ Filmmaker Casey Affleck (No. 73) was accused of sexually harassing two crew members on the set of "I'm Still Here," a documentary about actor Joaquin Phoenix.

■ State police Lt. Barbara Bennett (No. 87) was accused of making sexual advances on her administrative assistant and cutting her hours in Danvers when the overtures were rejected.

Many of the entries on the eBossWatch list involve sexual assault or bizarre behavior, punctuated

by disgraced U.S. Congressman Eric Massa (No. 4), who admitted that he groped and tickled one of his aides.

However, workplace harassment often doesn't plunge off the moral deep end. If there are no physical threats or prejudice-motivated acts involved, being obnoxious is not illegal. Sometimes a toxic working environment is like Chinese water torture in which a stream of single drops eventually make the victim insane.

When people describe their "bad boss" incidents to others, they might sound like minor annoyances. But when it's you that's experiencing the daily torment, it's reasonable to call in Amnesty International.

Someone close to me recently worked for a decade at a nonprofit institution led by a psycho. The organization is dedicated to spreading peace, justice, human rights and lots of hugs. However, behind closed doors, the kumbaya boss would either give her employee the "silent treatment" for weeks or lash out at her for irrational reasons.

Exposing this Jekyll-and-Hyde behavior to the nonprofit's supporters would have been explosive. But the head honcho will never make the "worst" list because she still wields tremendous influence in her victim's career field.

Early in my career, I once worked for a hothead who hated my guts ever since I tried to wear a pair of jeans to work instead of Dockers. These were nice, dark blue jeans — not any of those acid-washed varieties with holes in the

new year.

Retail sales rose 4.8 percent for the week ending with Christmas Day, Dec. 25, compared with the year-earlier period, according to data released yesterday by the International Council of

Here are eBossWatch.com's top 10 "Worst Bosses in America"

1 Eddie Burns Fire chief, Dallas, Texas

Hit by three sexual harassment lawsuits, including allegations that he left bodily fluids in a female employee's coffee.

2 Samuel Blackwell Greyhound bus supervisor, Richmond, Va.

Accused of sexually assaulting a female employee and offering sexual favors in return for increasing her hours.

3 Orlando Pizarro Pool supervisor, Jersey City, N.J.

Alleged to have made vulgar comments about the anatomy of female lifeguards and accused of "inappropriately touching" a minor.

4 U.S. Rep. Eric Massa New York Democrat

Resigned after male staffers complained about being groped and tickled.

5 Justin Murdock CEO of NovaRX, San Diego

Accused of showing pornographic films to a subordinate and simulating sex acts at meetings.

6 Paul Zatko Chrysler factory supervisor, Perrysburg, Ohio

Accused of berating an African-American auto worker with racial slurs and threatening to "get a rope" that would leave "burn marks around his neck."

7 Andre Chreky Salon owner, Washington, D.C.

Accused of sexually assaulting two salon employees, allegedly including tearing off a pair of underwear as a "souvenir."

8 Don Gough Mayor, Lynnwood, Wash.

Accused of belittling his executive assistant for getting pregnant and also using "unflattering nicknames" for female employees.

9 John Kuryak/James Lisinski/ Gary Bluman/Robert Mendez Erie County Water Authority, Buffalo, N.Y.

Municipal officials accused of harassing a white employee with racial slurs after he began dating and later married an African-American woman.

10 John Kessel Physician, Hickory, N.C.

Accused of harassing a female doctor with sexually graphic personal remarks, including showing her an X-ray of his genitals.



STAFF GRAPHIC

knees — but dress code violations had no nuances.

One afternoon when my boss was unhappy with how I did an assignment, he screamed at me across our open-floorplan office. Being in my early 20s, paying \$300 for rent and having nothing to lose, I confronted him. I calmly strutted over to his desk,

stuck my chest a few inches from his face and said in my deepest voice, "I'd be delighted to make your suggested changes, but don't you ever, ever, ever, talk to me that way again!"

I could sense that the secretaries and typists in the office wanted to give me a standing ovation, but they didn't dare. Would I have been so daring if I had a mortgage and kids to feed back then? Probably not.

Lost in the latest unemployment and job creation statistics are the number of workers silently tolerating an abusive boss. If the economy gets better and more career choices open

up in 2011, maybe the bully bosses will have fewer places to hide.

The Working Stiff column runs every Wednesday. Check out the Stiff blog at www.bostonherald.com/blogs/workingStiff. E-mail feedback to heraldstiff@gmail.com.

Shoppers have signaled

they will cut back after the holidays, and a fierce blizzard on the U.S. East Coast just after Christmas may have already dampened their appetite for extra spending.

— REUTERS

Shoppers' gift to retailers: Best holiday sales since '07

NEW YORK — New sales data confirm that U.S. retailers are poised to show their best holiday season in three years, but investors seemed unimpressed as concerns mount that shoppers will pull back in the

Shopping Centers and Goldman Sachs.

ICSC and Goldman had already raised two weeks ago on the strength of November sales.

Still, the Standard & Poor's Retail Index fell 0.3 percent yesterday. Analysts are questioning whether

store chains can keep their hot streak going.

A more detailed picture of how stores fared during the holidays is expected Jan. 6, when major retailers report sales for December.