

# WHEN THE BOSS SHRUGS

## JANUARY 2009

The following is a letter making the rounds around the internet. Is a great example of the plight and struggles that are emblematic of our clients, readers, and listeners.

*To All My Valued Employees,*

*There have been some rumblings around the office about the future of this company, and more specifically, your job. As you know, the economy has changed for the worse and presents many challenges. However, the good news is this: The economy doesn't pose a threat to your job. What does threaten your job however, is the changing political landscape in this country.*

*However, let me tell you some little tidbits of fact which might help you decide what is in your best interests. First, while it is easy to spew rhetoric that casts employers against employees, you have to understand that for every business owner there is a back story. This back story is often neglected and overshadowed by what you see and hear. Sure, you see me park my Mercedes outside. You've seen my big home at last year's Christmas party. I'm sure; all these flashy icons of luxury conjure up some idealized thoughts about my life.*

*However, what you don't see is the back story. I started this company 28 years ago. At that time, I lived in a 300 square foot studio apartment for 3 years. My entire living apartment was converted into an office so I could put forth 100% effort into building a company, which by the way, would eventually employ you.*

*My diet consisted of Ramen Pride noodles because every dollar I spent went back into this company. I drove a rusty Toyota Corolla with a defective transmission. I didn't have time to date. Often times, I stayed home on weekends, while my friends went out drinking and partying. In fact, I was married to my business -- hard work, discipline, and sacrifice.*

*Meanwhile, my friends got jobs. They worked 40 hours a week and made a modest \$50K a year and spent every dime they earned. They drove flashy cars and lived in expensive homes and wore fancy designer clothes. Instead of hitting the Nordstrom's for the latest hot fashion item, I was trolling through the Goodwill store extracting any clothing item that didn't look like it was birthed in the 70's. My friends refinanced their mortgages and lived a life of luxury. I, however, did not. I put my time, my money, and my life into a business with a vision that eventually, some day, I too, will be able to afford these luxuries my friends supposedly had.*

*So, while you physically arrive at the office at 9am, mentally check in at about noon, and then leave at 5pm, I don't. There is no "off" button for me. When you leave the office, you are done and you have a weekend all to yourself. I unfortunately do not have the freedom. I eat, and breathe this company every minute of the day. There is no rest. There is no weekend. There is no happy hour. Every day this business is attached to my hip like a 1 year old special-needs child. You, of course, only see the fruits of that garden -- the nice house, the Mercedes, the vacations... You never realize the back story and the sacrifices I've made.*

*Now, the economy is falling apart and I, the guy that made all the right decisions and saved his money, have to bail-out all the people who didn't. The people that overspent their paychecks suddenly feel entitled to the same luxuries that I earned and sacrificed a decade of my life for.*

*Yes, business ownership has its benefits, but the price I've paid is steep and not without wounds. Unfortunately, the cost of running this business, and employing you, is starting to eclipse the threshold of marginal benefit and let me tell you why:*

*I am being taxed to death and the government thinks I don't pay enough. I have state taxes, federal taxes, property taxes, sales and use taxes payroll taxes, workers compensation taxes, and unemployment taxes. In other words...Taxes on taxes. I have to hire a tax man to manage all these taxes and then guess what? I have to pay taxes for employing him. Government mandates and regulations and all the accounting that goes with it, now occupy most of my time. On Oct 15th, I wrote a check to the US Treasury for \$288,000 for quarterly taxes. You know what my "stimulus" check was? Zero, nada, zilch.*

*The question I have is this: Who is stimulating the economy? Me, the guy who has provided 14 people good paying jobs and serves over 2,200,000 people per year with a flourishing business? Or, the single mother sitting at home pregnant with her fourth child waiting for her next welfare check? Obviously, government feels the latter is the economic stimulus of this country.*

*The fact is, if I deducted (Read: Stole) 50% of your paycheck you'd quit and you wouldn't work here. I mean, why should you? That's nuts. Who wants to get rewarded for only 50% of their hard work? Well I agree, which is why your job is in jeopardy.*

*Here is what many of you don't understand ... to stimulate the economy you need to stimulate what runs the economy. Had suddenly government mandated me that I didn't need to pay taxes, guess what? Instead of depositing that \$288,000 into the Washington black-hole, I would have spent it, hired more employees, and generated substantial economic growth. My employees would have enjoyed the wealth of that tax cut in the form of promotions and better salaries. But you can forget it now.*

*When you have a comatose man on the verge of death, you don't defibrillate and shock his thumb thinking that it will bring him back to life-do you? Or, do you defibrillate his heart? Business is at the heart of America and always has been. To restart it, you must stimulate it, not kill it. Suddenly, the power brokers in Washington believe the poor of America are the essential drivers of the American economic engine. Nothing could be further from the truth and this is the type of change you can keep.*

*So where am I going with all this? It's quite simple*

*If any new taxes are levied on me, or my company, my reaction will be swift and simple. I fire you. I fire your co-workers. You can then plead with the government to pay for your mortgage, your SUV, and your child's future. Frankly, it isn't my problem anymore.*

*Then, I will close this company down, move to another country, and retire. You see, I'm done. I'm done with a country that penalizes the productive and gives to the unproductive. My motivation to work and to provide jobs will be destroyed, and with it, will be my citizenship.*

*If you lose your job, it won't be at the hands of the economy; it will be at the hands of a political hurricane that swept through this country, steamrolled the constitution, and will have changed its landscape forever. If that happens, you can find me sitting on a beach, retired, and with no employees to worry about...*

*Sincerely,*

*Your boss*

The reality is that with a couple of changes made here and there, this letter could be a template used by business owners throughout our nation.