

She stole my idea!

Ji Hyun Lee

June 11, 2009

“If you are smart and have consistently good ideas, then it opens you up to having your ideas stolen by conniving co-workers. Especially if you are new and don't know office politics,” says Lerzan Aksoy, professor at Fordham University and co-author of the book ***Why Loyalty Matters***.



Unfortunately, this is one of the most common complaints voiced by employees. When you spend days and nights agonizing over a presentation, it's absolutely infuriating when you find that someone else has taken your words and copied and pasted it as their own.

Aksoy suggests that the problem could stem from the fact that your great ideas are not being communicated to your boss in a timely manner— doing this eliminates the opportunity for conniving workers. “It's very important to build a rapport with your primary manager and maintain communication with him/her about your ideas,” she says.

A great way to accomplish this is by sending email updates to your boss and colleagues about the progress of your work. You can also ask others if they had any suggestions for improvement on your ideas. That way, you have a documented record of your work and other people's suggestions.

If your work has already been snatched, the best advice here is to talk to the guilty colleague. Be diplomatic and sincere when you let the thieving co-worker know how you feel. “I'm really hurt that you took this work from me but I also know you did it because you like my ideas. Why don't we try brainstorming together next time so we can both put our talents to use?”

Depending on how friendly you are with your boss consider bringing him into the loop about a co-worker's deception. Once put on notice, the guilty worker will be very reluctant to try to pull the same stunt on you again.



Ji Hyun Lee is a journalist with more than seven years of experience contributing for online and print publications. Her work has appeared in Forbes.com, Small Business Review, SC Magazine and DiversityPlus. She lives in New York, one of the most competitive job markets in the country, and strongly believes in the old saying, 'if you can make it there, you can make it anywhere.'