

my wife doesn't know I hench, the evil sex ray made my employees do it, and more
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by [whetherwoman](#)

Summary

It's hench week at Ask a Manager!

Notes

See the end of the work for [notes](#)

Welcome to henching week! This week we'll be answering questions from readers who work in (or want to work in) the rapidly growing supervillain industry. We've got some great stuff coming up later in the week, including an interview with the manager of an onsite daycare at a supervillain base, and a guest post from Evil HR Lady. Today it's five answers to five questions. Here we go...

1. My wife doesn't know I hench but it might come up on a background check

I've been a salaried hench for five years now, and am overall happy with my job - fair pay, good benefits, reasonably low risk of death or dismemberment, great commute. My wife and I first got together about six months after I started henching, and at the time it seemed reasonable to tell her I worked for an insurance company. (It's sort of true - we do provide a certain sort of insurance, in the "nice laboratory you got there, be a shame if it exploded" sense.) There never seemed to be a good time to tell her otherwise, and anyway it's safer for her not to know, just in case. The problem is, she's currently applying for government jobs, and I've heard the background checks are really thorough. Will my henching job be a problem for her background checks, and if so what do I tell her?

For some government background checks, yes, it will be a problem. If your wife is applying for jobs that require federal security clearance, your job as a hench will definitely disqualify her. For other government jobs, such as local municipalities, it may never come up. Do speak to your HR

department, though. Depending on how well-established your supervillain is, they may have experience with falsifying background checks, providing fake references, or even bribing or blackmailing government officials. You never know until you ask!

No matter how good your HR department is, though, they can't bribe or blackmail your wife. Chances are high that she will find out eventually that you work in "insurance" and not insurance, whether it's through a background check, a news report, or even intra-villain sabotage. Your best chance of keeping both your job and your marriage is to tell her yourself.

2. Asking for a raise when your boss is evil

I work in supply chain management for a supervillain, and have been very supported in my career growth. Over the time I've been here I've moved from, say, Llama Collar Purchasing to Cyborg Llama Parts Manager to my current position of Director of Radioactive & Cyborg Llama Suppliers, reporting directly to my supervillain. The only problem is that my pay has not kept up with my title changes, and according to some discreet asking around I'm making at least 20% under what I could be making sourcing this kind of material for another supervillain. I'd rather get a pay raise than change jobs, but I'm a little worried about getting the radioactive cyborg llama herd set on me if I ask the wrong way. How do I ask for a pay raise without setting off a violent evil crime spree?

One of the most important things to remember when working for a supervillain (or, really, in any job) is that you are not responsible for the ways people choose to react to you. Yes, your boss might have the radioactive cyborg llama herd attack you if you ask for a pay raise that reflects your market value... but if they respond to a perfectly reasonable request that way, then they're probably volatile enough to set the radioactive cyborg llama herd on you if say any number of reasonable things. I know you say that other than the pay you're happy in your current job, but worrying your boss will attack you with radioactive cyborg llamas can really affect your sense of what's normal in a job, and as I've said before, [staying in a job that warps your sense of normality](#) can hurt you in the long run. I'd strongly recommend on following up on some of those discreet inquiries and taking an interview or two, to get a sense of what your options are in terms of job culture as well as pay.

But let's say you do decide to stay in your current job. Start by realistically thinking through what the risks are. Has your boss made extreme or impulsive decisions before? Do they frequently react to you, specifically, that way? Are there checks and balances in your organization so that no one person, even the boss, can free the radioactive llama herd on a whim? If the risks seem high, then you'll need to carefully consider whether it's worth it to ask for a raise, or at least have an escape plan in place. (I'd personally go with a jet pack or ejector seat - anything that will get you out of range fast.)

But if your boss isn't regularly in the habit of throwing employees to the ~~wolves~~ llamas, then go ahead and give it a try. Frame your request in what's best for the organization: Paying market rate will help the budget in the long run, so that they're not faced with a sudden increase if they ever need to hire for the role. This might even be a good time to see if you can do a full pay review, at least in your department - you're probably not the only one who's underpaid, and in this job market that's a real risk for any organization. Good luck, and my best wishes for your continued non-radioactivity.

3. Mentoring a potentially evil employee

I think one of my employees, "Joffrey", has a lot of potential as a supervillain. He never lets relationships get in the way of his goals, and he holds a grudge like

nobody's business. Six months ago he put in a lot of overtime on a project for another team, and just before go-live the leader of the team, "Sansa", had to tell him that the project wasn't going through after all. Ever since, he's been making life miserable for Sansa's whole team. He has low-level temperature control powers, and he's used it to create mini cold or heat pockets right around the thermostat in Sansa's unit. They can't consistently set the thermostat cold or hot, because he'll just switch it on them. He'll also create mini temperature changes in meetings, just around one person's hand or foot. Honestly it's pretty hilarious, but of course it's not the kind of behavior I want to encourage on my team. It came to a head yesterday when the other three people on my team set up a meeting with me specifically about how Joffrey's quirks are making their lives harder. Apparently people from other teams are coming directly to them with work requests so that they don't have to talk to Joffrey, which is increasing their workload while leaving him with extra time to play pranks. Still, that kind of persistence and loose interpretation of rules could take Joffrey far. How do I keep Joffrey on his path to supervillainy while appeasing my other employees?

Your primary focus as a manager needs to be on the work your team is doing right now, not the work they could potentially do in the future. Mentoring an employee and thinking about their future career is great! But not at the expense of the work your team, as a whole, needs to do right now. It's time for a serious conversation with Joffrey. If there are other, more independent roles in your organization that you think he might be a better fit for, definitely feel free to mention that to him. You could even talk with your manager, or your supervillain if you have that kind of relationship, about whether it's possible to create a new role tailored to Joffrey's abilities and personality. (Many supervillains are happy to have a mildly chaotic hench whose primary role is to make people's lives miserable!) But you also must make sure you tell Joffrey, firmly and clearly, that while he is on your team this behavior must stop.

And then you need to apologize to your other team members. If Joffrey's behavior has gotten to the point where they need to come to you as a group to address it, you've let things slide for too long. Rebuild their trust in you by being trustworthy, and show that you take their concerns and well-being seriously by making sure Joffrey's behavior doesn't continue to impact their workloads.

4. The evil sex ray made my employees do it

Alison, I really need your advice on something that happened last week. Two of my employees were caught on camera having sex, during work hours, right in the middle of a lab. This is, of course, entirely against policy—I'm not a prude, but sex should obviously be solely a private activity that does not take place at work or during work hours. Not only that, but the lab is a particularly unsafe place to do it! There's equipment in there that's delicate, dangerous, expensive, or all three, and we're all really lucky that nothing got irreparably damaged. Normally I'd fire these two employees immediately, or at least strongly reprimand them, but here's the catch: they were assigned to develop a machine that would cause its targets to be overwhelmed by lust, and, well, they just proved that it worked. My boss is thrilled about it and wants to completely ignore all our policies, but I can't help but feel that's not fair to their coworkers, who not only had to see them going at it but, for some of them, even had to help physically separate them. After the incident I sent the instigators home, and they both chose to use sick time for the rest of the week, but they're due back in the office tomorrow and I have no idea what to say!

While I generally agree with you that [sex should not happen in the workplace](#), this is a clear case of the issue occurring because of the employees' assigned duties. I'd strongly recommend getting some legal advice before reprimanding your employees, let alone firing them. Depending on what

precautions were or were not in place to prevent employees being affected by their project, they may even have cause to involve the Super Villain Occupational Health and Safety Administration. At the least, I'd recommend taking a close look at your policies around use of PPE in the lab, and any mental health support or hazard bonuses you could provide to your other employees who needed to step in.

Talk to your two employees separately, apologize that they were put in that situation, and cross your fingers that they won't file an injury complaint. If you think supers are scary, you've never dealt with SVOSHA.

5. Choosing between super internships

I graduated college about six months ago, and have unfortunately had a difficult time finding work. The good news is, I finally have two offers to choose between. Both of them are internships, and both are in the field I majored in. The thing is, one of them is with a superhero, and the other is with a supervillain. The supervillain internship looks a lot better on paper: there's a stipend, plus room and board, and I'd be working directly with a couple of projects that could give me really helpful experience. The superhero internship offers room and board but no stipend, and while I would get to see how a superhero works up close and personal, I would spend more time observing than getting direct experience. On the other hand, maybe any job with a superhero would look better on my resume than any job with a supervillain? But also I could really use that stipend... student debts don't pay themselves. What should I do?

If it didn't occur to you to secretly take both, working with a superhero is probably a better personality fit.

End Notes

Happy Yuletide, florahart! I saw in a past letter you mentioned Ask a Manager, and I immediately started cackling at the idea of a possible crossover, so I very much hope you enjoy this treat!

Post-reveals note: omg I cannot believe the response to this fic, this is maybe my wildest experience in fandom ever. Thank you so much to everyone for all the love! If you read this fic because you like Ask a Manager but haven't read Hench, please do - it's hilarious and wonderful.

Thank you leupagus and etben for telling me it was a good idea to write this, and extra special thanks to Z for coming up with the answer to the final letter.

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