

The best boss I ever had

Steve Widdrington, rigger, Visualize It Inc.,
Toronto

“We design and install decorations (for holiday displays) in office buildings, and the season starts around the beginning of November. And because we have around 60 buildings, it’s about a five-week period of absolutely getting slammed.”

“We do the Commerce Court building at Bay and King and about three years ago they wanted to do something like, ‘Wow.’ So my boss, Judith Crombie, saw this tree she wanted to buy. It was 32 feet tall, 18 feet in diameter at the bottom, the second-largest artificial tree in Canada. It came from Mexico, so we head out to this huge supply store and go to the back and there’s probably 25 boxes and two big huge wooden crates. We open the crates and we’re looking for the instructions, and there are none. We have to put it together piece by piece and there are about 180 pieces.”

“It was a high-risk investment, and she’s scared to death because she’s just purchased this thing for \$14,000 dollars. But Judith demonstrates the ability to adjust to any situation. If something goes wrong, she doesn’t yell, she doesn’t scream, she has this aura about her of calmness that seems to make the team produce. It’s very unique and very special.”

“We did it, and it was one of the nicest buildings in Toronto by far.”

Sarah Liss, columnist, The Grid, Toronto

“At cbc.ca/arts, Andre Mayer and Greig Dymond had a tradition of concluding every year with a faux-formal ceremony called the ‘Artinis,’ modelled on

the Oscars, during which the members of our small but scrappy team would have our accomplishments over the past year recognized with raucous applause and general hilarity. By ceremony’s end, each and every person would have ‘won’ at least two or three Artinis.”

“The key, though, was how detailed/tailored the awards were – they showed the kind of insight and caring Andre and Greig brought to the position of team leader. Categories would include things like ‘Most dogged, selfless pursuit of a celebrity interview,’ or ‘Most lewd-sounding pun in display writing.’ And of course, there were some more substantial awards given out, but never in a way where it seemed as though one writer’s work was more valued than another’s. I swear I’ve never worked on a team that was so loving and supportive and engaged and close-knit.”

Antoinette Blunt, President, Ironside
Consulting, Sault Ste. Marie, Ont.

“I had a boss early on who I admire because she had the ability to be strong and firm when dealing with difficult situations, but at the same time she was also very compassionate.”

“I remember going to a national conference and I had my daughter and husband with me because I travelled so much and it was one time I could take my family and spend a little time with them in the evenings. My daughter was six years old and I was so excited for her to meet my boss. I walked her up to my boss and said this is my daughter, and she looked up at my boss and with her finger shaking at her, said, ‘You quit calling my mommy to so many meetings.’ I was just astounded and embarrassed

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and I said, 'She's not the one, that's mommy's other boss.' My boss laughed and she looked at me and said, 'Can I talk to your daughter for a few minutes?' and I said, 'Sure.' She leaned down so she wasn't towering over my daughter and looked at her and said, 'Would you like to talk with me? I can take you over and get you some of those strawberries with the chocolate on them, and maybe I can tell you about mommies who work.' She took her aside and explained to her that sometimes moms have to go away and it's okay. And I thought, this is just an amazing person, this is someone who understands what employees need but also understands peoples' lives."

"Taking a few minutes to speak to a child who was obviously struggling with a mother who has to travel for work - I'll never forget that."

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