

# So, what do poppyseed bagels have to do with HR Like a Boss?

## MY DAD AND THE HR GUY

I recall one night when I was a child, waiting at the dinner table for my father to come home with my family in our unofficially assigned seats like we normally did on weekday nights. The aforementioned “we” was me, the youngest of four siblings and a newly minted ten-year-old, my two older brothers (Tony and Andy), and older sister (Terese). Our mom was working diligently to prepare a home-cooked meal for our nightly dinner. The grandfather clock struck six times which meant it was time to eat in our house.


Not quite yet.

A crucial part of the dinnertime routine that had not happened was my dad’s arrival home from work. He was the CEO of a regional hospital, Barberton Citizens Hospital in Ohio, that employed about 1,000 employees. My dad made being CEO of a large organization look easy.

There were no cell phones and my dad forgot to call my mom on our home phone before he left the office. Our family dinners meant a lot to all of us, and my dad especially cherished them as he was away at work at 7 AM most days. Dinnertime was his first chance of the day to spend any substantive time with me, my siblings, and my mom. Our conversations

were typically relegated to what one of the four Bernatovicz kids did during that day or how one of the neighbor kids did something silly, funny, or just plain stupid.

My dad’s reason for being late started with a unique encounter he had with Barberton Citizens Hospital’s VP of HR, Dick Bause. My dad hardly ever talked about what happened at work, so this was new. Most of my experiences with my dad’s work included visiting him in his office, taking him lunch, or meeting his colleagues at get togethers or on the golf course (my dad and I played a lot of golf together even when I was a young kid). So, when he started to talk about work, he had everyone’s attention.





# "You failed your drug test."

"Well, I had an interesting day today," Dad began the exchange he had with Mr. Bause, who seemed to me, a seasoned 10-year-old kid at the time, to be an experienced HR pro. But let's be honest, what did I really know? Mr. Bause was always very nice. What I remember the most about him was his large glasses... now that might not qualify you as a great HR pro, but it was memorable to me as I sported the same kind of large frames with Coke-bottle lenses. My 10-year-old kid view of his experience was that he seemed about the same age as my dad, and my dad was experienced.

Back to the story that had our full attention during our family dinner, my dad said that Mr. Bause walked into his office and said, "Mike, we have a problem."

My dad went on to say that whenever his VP of HR says something like this it is not good. On top of that, my dad shared that Mr. Bause led with "do you mind if I shut your door?" At that point, my dad knew something was wrong. As my dad recounted, Mr. Bause started to sweat and was visibly nervous.

Mr. Bause sheepishly said to my dad "do you remember the random drug test you took a couple of days ago?" The way my dad shared the story it seemed that he had lost track of time and the fact that he had even taken the

drug test. It was no big deal to him as my dad was proud to boast that he had never even experimented with drugs.

Mr. Bause said, "you failed your drug test" to which my dad exclaimed "What!?" and Mr. Bause shared that my dad tested positive for opium.

As my dad told the story, you could still see the shock of hearing the words that he had failed the drug test. My dad said, "I have never taken a drug before in my life let alone opium." Out of nowhere my mom chimed in, "Mike, you know that poppyseeds have opium in them and you have been eating a lot of poppyseed bagels lately." My dad said, "Funny you should say that, Bause and I figured that out moments after we got over the shock that I had failed the drug test."

This was my first experience hearing about Human Resources. As a child who knew his father didn't touch any substances outside of whisky, I was left with the impression that HR professionals were the rules enforcement arm within an organization. And my father had to give up poppyseed bagels. Maybe HR was more than that, but the young me certainly couldn't comprehend it.

*This excerpt is from "HR Like a Boss" by John Bernatovicz. To learn more, visit [willory.com/hrlab](http://willory.com/hrlab). This excerpt has been edited for length with the permission of the author. Do not reproduce without expressed permission.*

