**Lab 2 - Deflection**

For the following posts on *Ask a Manager,* a online advice column about work, translate the title into an **Actor - Behavior - Object event in ACT**, and run the simulation in interact.jar. Report the deflection of the event.

**Example**

## **my boss keeps commenting on my acne**

“I (30F) got a new supervisor in the last six months, who is also part of the C-suite. She is very talented, knowledgeable, and friendly. She has done a lot in terms of supporting and mentoring me, and I am really appreciative of her efforts. However, one issue with her is that she can often be unpredictable, especially when it comes to pointing out things that others may be sensitive about.

I have adult acne partially due to some health issues. I am working with appropriate medical professionals to find solutions/diagnoses (and a lot of it takes time to fix). However, in the meantime, I often get break-outs. I cover them fairly well with makeup, but some days are worse than others. On those worse days, I just grit my teeth and try to get through it, but it really is doing a number on my self esteem, especially since I am not a teenager anymore and worry that it could hurt my professional image.

Enter unpredictable boss: on multiple occasions where I have had some rougher skin days, my boss has asked me directly, IN FRONT of other people, “What’s going on with your skin?” When I make a vague comment about having a bad skin day and she shouldn’t worry about it, she continues to press and badger me about it, with an audience. It is absolutely mortifying and distressing for me. Trust me, I know what is going on with my face and just want people to ignore it. It happened again today, and has left me unable to get work done because I am so upset.”

**ABO translation:**

Boss badgers embarrassed employee

**Deflection:**

6.5

**ABO translation:**

Boss humiliates employee

**Deflection:**

13.9

## **my male coworkers keep vomiting emotionally on me**

<https://www.askamanager.org/2022/11/my-male-coworkers-keep-vomiting-emotionally-on-me.html>

“I am the sole female Turtle Analyst on my team (job title changed for anonymity, obviously). I’m young and new at the company (just had my two-year anniversary). I use the our database’s coding language daily. Part of my job is collaborating with the Turtle database team. Most of it is complex, intermediate questions, like, “How do I turn Sliders with long tails into Snappers in the Turtle database?” The issue is the department who handles it (six men) think I’m their group therapist.

This week ALONE I’ve heard about dead brothers, failing marriages, sick pets, emotional abuse, and so much more in graphic detail. From all of them. I can’t escape it because I do need to come to these people. My org doesn’t give admin access to anyone outside that team, so I can’t do this myself.”

ABO translation:

Deflection:

## **I’ve been overworked for months and my manager won’t help**

<https://www.askamanager.org/2022/08/ive-been-overworked-for-months-and-my-manager-wont-help.html>

“I have been covering for a coworker who is the lead for our shared role for the past two months. Covering her for a few days would normally have been no problem, but due to our clinic being short-staffed and an increase in clientele, this is starting to take its toll on my productivity and mental health. Conversations with my managers haven’t been productive — they say a bunch of stuff but nothing happens, no help gets hired in, and I’ve had no increase in pay.

I’m over two months behind on my paperwork because I’m balancing doing four people’s jobs some days. The job I originally was hired to do has become my last priority most days. I feel like a failure because I’m crying every day, I’m not being paid enough to even function (my car is literally on its last leg), and I’m being overworked so much that I can’t look or interview anywhere else. I get in at 7 am to try to get a head start and usually skip my lunch and I don’t leave until 5:30 or 6 some days. I even tried for a promotion to escape from the work and they thought I wasn’t qualified … even though I’m nearly single-handedly running a clinic in less than nine months since I started.

I can’t just decide to go back to working eight hours a day because of the number of clients who are now being scheduled. I don’t have the option of electing to see only half of the people who are scheduled with us. I then have to enter in all the data from those visits or else it goes unprocessed and leaves an even bigger mess for me to crawl my way out of. Plus, if our paperwork isn’t done in a timely fashion, it could affect our future funding. So I feel stuck working all these hours, and my managers won’t help. How do I escape this situation?”

ABO translation:

Deflection:

## **my boss trash-talks my coworker to me**

[**https://www.askamanager.org/2019/05/my-boss-trash-talks-my-coworker-to-me.html**](https://www.askamanager.org/2019/05/my-boss-trash-talks-my-coworker-to-me.html)

“I graduated college last May, and I am new to the corporate world, so your podcast has helped me learn how to deal with many workplace issues that I have encountered. However, I have a pretty big issue that has been bothering me for months regarding the dynamic of my job.

I work in a large corporate law firm. There are only three of us in my department. The past few months have been exceptionally busy. My manager (Eric) and I work at a quick pace and are able to get a lot of work done in a short amount of time. However, the other member of our department (Tracey) works at a much slower pace. She is very social at work, and won’t hesitate to put aside her work to chat with coworkers who stop by our department. She also gets frustrated easily, and physically huffs and puffs when work gets a little hectic. It can get a little annoying, especially when I feel I shoulder some of her workload, but since I’ve only had this job since August, and Tracey has worked here for decades, so I don’t speak out about it.

The real problem is stemming from the way my manager is handling the situation. Whenever Tracey huffs or puffs, or states that she needs more time to complete an assignment, Eric will text me at work. These texts are usually something along the lines of “I can’t believe she hasn’t finished that yet. You and I would have been done hours ago.” Or “Why can’t she stop talking and just finish her work? This isn’t social hour!”

It puts me in a very awkward position. I don’t appreciate that as a manager, he is badmouthing one coworker to another, but I also don’t want to snap back at him and say, “That’s completely inappropriate. Please don’t text me about her” out of fear of his reaction. I have tried to ignore his texts, but then he just waits until Tracey is gone on her lunch break and will comes over to desk to say it in person. It is uncomfortable beyond words.

In the past few weeks, it has come to the point where he is explicitly asking my opinion for how he should deal with Tracey. He asked how I thought Tracey would respond to being placed in a different department. When I told him I was not sure, he busted out laughing and said, “That probably wouldn’t go over well. She’s been here for 30 years.” He also informed me that he spoke to HR about her, and they told him they basically cannot do anything unless she is a real threat to the progress of our department. Again, he is divulging information to me that I am not sure I should be hearing.

Eric just started managing in June, a few months before I got this job, so I think his inexperience at managing combined with his laid back nature is causing him to think he and I are “friends” before anything. I feel like I’ve dug myself into a hole because I haven’t said anything to him, but I really just don’t know what I would say. Help!”

ABO translation:

Deflection

## **my coworker keeps telling me how to do my job (and she’s often wrong)**

<https://www.askamanager.org/2020/04/my-coworker-keeps-telling-me-how-to-do-my-job-and-shes-often-wrong.html>

“I started a new job at the end of February as the communications manager for a small nonprofit. I’m really lucky that our grants and the work that we do haven’t been disrupted by COVID-19, but it’s been a bit of a rocky start.

I’m having some trouble with one coworker in particular. This coworker — I’ll call her Maria — is running one of our grant programs, but isn’t senior to me and we don’t report to the same boss. She’s been at the company for about a year and is 10-15 years older than me (for reference, I’m about five years into my career). Though Maria’s job doesn’t have anything to do with communications anymore, she’s told me she used to work in communications “many years ago” and is fairly savvy on social media.

My issue is this: Maria tries to be helpful and offer me communications advice and tips — but very often, they’re things I already know about or have ruled out. For example, I mentioned on a call that I was having trouble finding a picture of a very specific event that occurs in our state. Ten minutes after the call, she emails with links to free photo sites, both of which I know about and have been using for the last several months, and neither of which are likely to have a photo of this very specific event.

Another example: on a different call, someone asked about using a social media tool for their personal account — which I recommended against because it’s a little advanced for most of our staff and I just don’t have time to teach the staff how to use that kind of tool right now. After the call, Maria sent around links to a platform and now I have five emails from staff members asking me to train them on it — but this is just not a priority for me.

There’s a bunch of small things like this — we can’t afford a graphic designer, so I have to get creative with my admittedly limited skill set, and she’s pretty harsh on my designs, even when the rest of the team thinks they’re good/fine. I started sending the team stats and data to help inform decisions — she offered to help me set up Google Analytics, when I’m already using it.

When things like this happen, I try to take a step back and figure out if I’m annoyed because I’m embarrassed/defensive or if it’s just legitimately frustrating. I also try to ask myself if it’s a useful piece of information, but either way, I never know how to respond to those emails.

Do I need to let this go? I’m frustrated because it makes me feel like she doesn’t think I can’t do this job, but am I overreacting and taking it way too personally? Do you have any advice on responding politely, but firmly, that this is my job, not hers?”

ABO translation:

Deflection:

**Discussion questions**

1. Did you find it difficult to settle on identities and behaviors for each of the narratives?
2. What are the benefits to translating long-form text like this into ABO sentences?
3. What are the costs? (What information did you lose?)