

BUSINESS ADVICE

Moaning, Groaning and Whining Staff?

SEVEN WAYS FOR LEADERS TO EASILY MODEL WORKPLACE HARMONY AND HAVING HAPPY EMPLOYEES ALL AROUND

Corporate Advice



Caryn Walsh

WHAT DOES RESEARCH INDICATE

- 60% - 80% of all organisational workplace difficulties stem from strained relationships between employees, not because the individual does not have the necessary skills or role competencies
- The typical workplace manager spends 25% - 40% of their time dealing with workplace conflict. This amounts to 2 days each week. (Washington Business Journal, 2005)
- Two days of conflict each week results in approximately 96 days per annum - wasted time where managers must focus on dealing or addressing workplace conflict and taking their eye off the things they are supposed to do. How much money does that equate to?
- The cost of replacing an employee is high when they walk out of the Organisation due to unresolved issues. Ernst & Young reports the cost of losing and replacing an employee may be as high as 150% of the departing employee's annual salary. This includes the manager's time spent on training new employees, costing your Organisation thousands of dollars each time (Workforce.com)
- Two-thirds of workers say work has a significant impact on their stress levels and one in four has called in sick or taken a 'mental health day' due to work stress. (American Psychological Association, 2004)
- One-fourth of employees view their jobs as the number one stressor in their lives. (North-Western National Life.)



Misunderstanding others, not listening well, personal agendas and talking about other people negatively are listed as some of the main reasons relationships at work suffer and conflict walks in the Organisational door.

And when it does, productivity suffers. Unhappy people make unhappy workplaces which in turn, affect the bottom line.

Yet you've tried and tried to turn the problem around, sent them on training, spoken to the warring parties individually and yet nothing seems to help. Nothing.

Conflict at work increases when issues are not addressed, frustration grows over time, people start to pull away from each other, ultimately not uniting together to solve problems they face.

Factions then often occur and competition is declared between team members.

Worse still, is when Organisational leaders are the problem. When they talk about others and refuse to listen to those around them.

When this happens, a culture of fear and blame is created, which permeates throughout the entire Organisation.

The Impact of Workplace Bullying

The 'silent' epidemic in Organisations, impacts not only the victim, but also those around them and the overall productivity of the team or Organisation.

Workplace Bullying is defined as the 'intentional, repeated behaviour directed at an employee or group to embarrass, humiliate or

run into hundreds of millions of dollars per annum due to absenteeism, worker's compensation, stress leave and reduced productivity.

What's it costing your Organisation?

Workplace Conflict – a Leadership Issue

Employees are humans which means at times they annoy or irritate each other but if conflict is ongoing, it is a leadership issue.

Why? Because often leaders ignore the conflict, hope it will go away, pray their people will 'get over it' and that things will get better in the future. And they may, for a while.

But simmering tempers and frustration don't go away. They boil away under the surface, waiting for the right moment to explode.

And then the costs are high now only to the warring parties, but the whole team. And everybody runs for cover and it's a million times worse when the warring parties are the leaders.

Learning Core Communication Skills

Core skills in effective Organisational communication include active listening, empathy (compassion), standing your ground calmly (assertive), willingness to solve the issue, looking for solutions to problems, being respectful and acting in an emotionally intelligent manner.

It also helps to have a keen sense of humour and not be over-sensitive.

According to Conflictintheworkplace.com:

trust by strengthening relationships and enhancing conflict resolution skills, less conflict occurs.

When employees feel that their concerns are heard by their leader, job satisfaction and productivity increases.

This goes straight to the Organisation's bottom line.

From a leadership perspective, there needs to be a firm commitment to growing your people so that your Organisation can transform.

Conclusion

If workplace conflict is allowed to fester over time, it will only get worse - affecting morale, customer service, increasing individual and team stress and ultimately, negatively impacting on the effectiveness of your Organisation.

Modern day organisations need to focus on creating Organisations that have a 'can do' culture, where communication is expressed with clarity and empathy.

Also where employees want to come each day.

Jeff Kotter, author of Leading Change explains:

'The best performing organisations I know that operate in highly competitive industries have executives who spend most of their time leading, not managing employees who are arguing and fighting.'

Highly performing teams and Organisations deal with conflict quickly and well.'

■ Caryn Walsh is an International Business Consultant, Executive Coach, Keynote Speaker. She is in Fiji four times a year.

7 ways for Leaders to Model Workplace Harmony

- ✓ Be the role model who leads their people to greatness. Learn how to communicate well and connect with your people!
- ✓ Get the roles and the rules right. Roles tell people exactly who does what and rules let everybody know 'how we behave around here.' The Code of Conduct is a critical set of behavioural guide-lines that outlines what is acceptable and what is not, including how we deal with conflict
- ✓ Make your expectations clear about the culture you want in your team or Organisation. This focus should be on a culture of Achievement (of goals) and Support (of each other)
- ✓ Introduce a 'Zero Tolerance to Bullying' Workplace Policy and create robust processes to deal with this behavior when it arises
- ✓ Model the optimistic and positive behaviours you want to see from your people
- ✓ Be an emotionally intelligent leader who manages their emotions well
- ✓ Be the leader everybody wants to be like. Model the way!

Causes of Workplace Conflict?

- A lack of role clarity
- Unclear rules about how we are supposed to behave
- Unrealistic task expectations
- Ego's and protecting 'turf'
- Unclear processes, systems and deadlines
- Power games and politics
- Unmet needs
- A lack of tolerance to diversity
- The lack of effective communication
- Ineffective leadership that demoralise, not motivate, the people