



weLEAD Online Magazine

leadingtoday.org
©2009 weLEAD Incorporated

Conflicts in the Workplace: Top 10 Workplace Dysfunctions – And How to Terminate Them

By Roxanne Emmerich



The dysfunctional workplace is a killer. Untreated it will kill off your customer base, your profits, and your joy for living as surely as anything.

As managers, leaders and top executives within your organization you've got to kill the conflicts in your workplace first before dysfunction takes hold.

The Top Ten Workplace Conflicts That Disrupt Organizations - and the Cure for Each

No. 1: No teamwork

The best managers lead a team – not just a group of individual employees. If you have employees at odds and you show no desire to fix it then you are leading your organization to a disaster.

So, make sure that the most direct supervisor meets with those involved in a workplace conflict to learn what it will take to resolve it and to secure a firm commitment to do so. Don't forget to spell out immediate consequences in the event of failure.

No. 2: Saying one thing and meaning another.

If you have an employee with a pattern of saying, "But what I meant was...", call them on it. Requiring the offender to have all communications checked for clarity for a period of time usually nips this in the bud fast.

No. 3: Giving lip service to new ideas then undercutting them in private.

You'll want to enlist everyone's help in keeping this workplace conflict out. Make it clear that dissenting opinions are welcomed during decision making, but that once a decision is made, undercutting will not be tolerated.

No. 4: Defensiveness at reasonable suggestions.

As a manager, it is your responsibility to let your team know that you consider a willingness to improve to be one of the hallmarks of a person with a bright future in your company. Defensiveness should be viewed as what it is - an unwillingness to improve one's self.

No. 5: Attraction to chaos.

Pot stirring is a violation of principles and a threat to productivity. Counterbalance the pleasure they get from drama with a greater measure of negative consequences.

No. 6: Not following through on commitments.

Let your team know that they are expected to acknowledge errors and make a commitment to clean up every last bit of the resulting mess.

No. 7: Deflecting blame.

Deflecting blame equals deflecting responsibility. Make it clear that the only acceptable behavior is acceptance of responsibility and (as above) quick work to clean up the mess.

No. 8: People pretending like they "never got the memo."

If there was no breakdown in the actual system, make it clear that the employee is responsible for consistently accessing internal communications like memos and emails so that he is never again "out of the loop."

No. 9: Refusing to deal with conflict directly.

Conflict resolution is an essential part of a manager's job. Performance reviews can and should count disruptive interpersonal conflicts against managers on whose watch they occur.

No. 10: Gossiping and backstabbing.

Once you establish a zero-tolerance policy for talking behind another person's back, give your people permission to address conflict head-on, out loud, courageously and honestly. And make it clear that giving or receiving gossip is not acceptable.

You may have noticed a refrain coming back again and again in this advice: Make it clear. Once you've made the determination to purge your workplace of dysfunctional behavior, your greatest ally and most powerful tool will be clarity. Follow the advice in this article and you will terminate all workplace conflicts and improve your organization's productivity.

About the author:

Roxanne Emmerich is renowned for her ability to transform "ho hum" workplaces into massive results-oriented "bring-it-on" environments. To discover how you can ignite the passion of your employees, catapult performance to new levels, and boost employee morale of your company, subscribe to the Thank God It's Monday™ e-zine at <http://www.ThankGoditsMonday.com>

