

Workplace Bullies ... Sabotage your company's economic recovery initiatives

Taking a Stand
August 2002

Bullying is an intense issue; nevertheless, decent people need to change their compliant attitudes to assertive action by taking a stand for eliminating bullying behavior in the workplace.

Why? Four reasons:

1. It sabotages your CEO's initiatives for addressing the economic downturn;
2. It's a huge and unnecessary operating expense (see side bar to right);
3. It's just down right silly & emotionally-immature team behavior; plus
4. It's wasted time & energy; nobody has time for it! It's far better to focus on solving business issues, not behavior.

WHY DECENT PEOPLE DON'T STAND UP

All reasons can be grouped into four fears:

- Fear of attack
- Fear of rejection
- Fear of retaliation
- Fear of job loss (scarcity)

WHAT IS BULLYING BEHAVIOR?

Bully behavior is the common denominator of harassment, discrimination, prejudice, abuse, and conflict. "Bullying" according to Tim Field, "is a compulsive need

to displace aggression and is achieved by the expression of inadequacy (social, personal, interpersonal, behavioral, professional) by projecting that inadequacy onto others

through control and subjugation (criticism, exclusion, isolation)." He also effectively describes how bullying is sustained—pay careful attention to this... "Bullying is sustained by abdication of responsibility (denial,

counter-accusation, pretence of victimhood) and perpetuated by a climate of fear, ignorance, indifference, silence, denial, disbelief, deception, evasion of accountability, tolerance and reward for the bully."

**WORKPLACE BULLIES ARE NOT THE ONLY PEOPLE WHO MUST CHANGE ...
DECENT PEOPLE MUST CHANGE TOO!**

WHO'S RESPONSIBLE?

There are three types of people and all three have equal responsibility. They are: 1) the victim, 2) the bystander and 3) the perpetrator—the bully.

The bully's responsibility is to change their perceptions and behavior, but they are not yet strong or mature enough to know how. Therefore, it's the victim and/or bystander's responsibility to change their attitude and behavior by asserting the bully's behavior is no longer acceptable and they are unwavering about calling for change.

Why must you, the victim or bystander, take a stand? It's simple. If you deny the severity of the behavior and/or avoid speaking up, you're equally as accountable for the damage that results.

Continued denial and avoidance will actually make things worse because you are sending a clear "compliant" message: the bully rules; you lose.

If you are an avoiding leader, you are doubly hurt because eventually you will lose credibility.

Yes, it doesn't seem fair that the victim & bystander are equally accountable, but when you're honest with yourself you'll agree that of the three, only you two are responsible enough to avoid colluding with the bully.

HOW TO START

You have two interrelated options: targeted training or intervention.

Without a doubt, bullies hate soft skills training like communication and team building. Sending a bully to public courses and hoping he/she will "get it" is useless. However, if training is the best option, make it a targeted training session where open & frank talk (learning & change) takes place.

If an intervention is your

Costs of Bullying

- 1 in 8 people are bullied at work in the UK; similar results are being found in US
- The cost to the UK for lost work days due to bullying behaviors is estimated to be £32 billion a year.
- 6 April 2001: shares in Cerner Corporation nose-dived after the CEO, Neal Patterson, sent a bullying email to 400 managers which was then posted on a Yahoo financial message board
- For more evidence of costs, see Tim Field's web site: www.successunlimited.co.uk/bully/costs.htm

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WHAT’S BULLYING (CONT)

Tim defines a serial bully as: a) convincing liars who’ll make up anything to fit their needs, b) vindictive in private, but innocent and charming in public, c) excellent at deception, d) possessing an exceptional verbal ability and will outmaneuver most people in times of conflict, e) emotionally-immature and untrustworthy, f) unwilling to share or address emotional concerns responding instead with impatience, g) unruly when called into account by aggressively denying everything, then counter attacking with distorted criticisms often by bursting into tears, h) unable to distinguish between leadership (maturity, decisiveness, assertiveness, trust and integrity) and bullying (immaturity, impulsiveness, aggression, distrust, deceitfulness).

Another, less aggressive but more common form of bullying is the person who exhibits these behaviors: a) is constantly finding fault, b) gossips to make themselves look good, c) fabricates misleading stories by putting spin on reality, d) is non-specific or isn’t willing to give a straight answer, e) uses guilt or shame to get what they want, f) is not open to constructive feedback and g) has an inflated, almost, narcissistic attitude of “I’m right; you’re wrong.”

Want more definitions, check Tim’s website—very informative!

best option, there are two strategies: 1) a facilitated group meeting or 2) an individual intervention with the bully.

Both interventions work, but the facilitated group session is the most powerful because everyone in the bully’s system is able to voice their ideas and emotions in the open. These sessions are intense; therefore, they must be facilitated by an experienced outside facilitator. And finally, it’s critical that a set of clear and unambiguous behavioral agreements (we call these Action Agreements) are created that spell out what is and is not acceptable behavior.

There are several individual intervention strategies you could implement and the best one is when the bully’s supervisor presents the bully with a clear set of behavioral descriptions that spell out what the bully is to either start or stop doing. If the above option is not available to you, then use the 3 steps outlined below.

HOW TO TAKE A STAND

Do these: 1) introspection & commitment, 2) calling it out & 3) recovery.

1. Take an honest look inside—introspection. Uncover your fears of speaking up. Be gentle, but firm. It’s not helpful to feel guilty over your past behavior, just make a solemn vow that you will rise above your fears and that you will not allow anyone to bully you any longer—commitment.

Regain emotional control. Become a neutral observer—a detective of sorts—constructing a different way to approach the bully so as to not inflame their anger but will demonstrate your resolve. Keep a log of bullying behaviors. One incident is not that important. What’s important is the number, regularity & the patterns that reveal bullying behavior. It’s the patterns that expose their intent. And finally, find it inside yourself to believe that the bully is really a decent person; they can change with education and support!

2. Calling out the bully’s behavior, as a neutral observer, is not difficult when you don’t let your fears trip you up.

It’s extremely important that you describe their behaviors and patterns in a neutral way. Without being critical,

accusatory or judgmental, say what you have seen the bully do or have heard them say that’s not working for you. Next say what you want without telling them what to do. For example, “I have a right to live free from behind-the-back accusations & blame and I want this behavior to stop.”

Now, listen to their side of the story, and insist on creating an agreement. Your agreement needs to be specific and it requires all parties do something differently going forward.

3. If you are successful creating an agreement(s), then you will feel a huge sense of relief. Don’t be deceived, because it will not take very long for the agreement to be broken either by you or the bully. Don’t be discouraged. It’s not about doing the agreement perfectly, it’s about recovery when the agreement is broken. Just take a deep breath, acknowledge the incident and recommit to the agreement(s).

For more help: talk with a trusted friend, contact your EAP or private therapist, review Tim’s web site and/or contact us.

PERHAPS THE BEST REASON : Do No Harm

If you are currently a bully’s victim or a bystander, ask yourself these intensely personal questions...“what will it take for me to take a stand against the harm I see or feel? How much more pain can I honestly take or observe before I say enough!? And how will I take a stand?” The answers to these questions will be revealed to you only when you get sick and tired of being sick and tired of the bully’s behavior.

Martin Luther King’s courage in taking a stand for all the harm African Americans were suffering is a role model for us all. The silent majority, the ones who knew segregation was wrong, were encouraged by his words and his steadfast conviction, and eventually more and more of those decent people took a stand. Be like him because there’s plenty more work to do to achieve the ‘dream’ of basic human rights for all. One very specific way you and I can demonstrate our resolve to do no harm is to do our part—today—in transforming the workplace bully. Will you join the silent majority by taking a stand?!

*Workplace Bullies
Win...When Decent
People Do Nothing*