

Conquering Workplace Dysfunction:

Dealing With Difficult Staff and Coworkers



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2014 Spring Conference

Farmington, CT

March 12, 2014

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Hopes, Fears, and Takeaways

What is one hope you have for today's session?

What is one fear that you have about today's session?

What is one thing you would like to take away from our session today?

Workplace Challenges:

Identify a challenging employee in your workplace. What makes them difficult and what impact does this difficulty cause to you and your organization?

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What would this relationship look like if it were improved? What would the benefits be for you and your department/organization?

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- A good manager doesn't try to eliminate conflict; he tries to keep it from wasting the energies of his people. If you're the boss and your people fight you openly when they think that you are wrong - that's healthy.

Robert Townsend

"The proper question is not 'How can I motivate others?' but rather, 'How can people create the conditions within which others will motivate themselves?'"

Edward Deci

The most important single ingredient in the formula of success is knowing how to get along with people.

Theodore Roosevelt

If you want people to act in another way, you have to let them know how a different behavior would yield a better consequence.

Kerry Patterson (Crucial Confrontations)

Difficulty in the Workplace

Work-Style Differences

The Indecisionater

- They take days to make a decision and often revisits it after its been finally made. When things fall apart and they are held responsible for their indecision, they become indignant or evasive. "It's not MY fault!" is a phrase regularly used by them.
- **How to cope:** Establish a deadline for decisions and a default decision that will hold true if no decision is made. When the deadline comes, refuse to consider any other alternatives.

The Rebel

- They thrive on the negative attention that comes from disrespecting authority and organizational policies and procedures (i.e. lunch and dress code). They miss deadlines just to prove they don't have to follow the rules and takes up causes without understanding the implications of their actions.
- **How to cope:** Aim them at the right enemy. These employees often do well as "customer advocates" who can take on politics to see that customers get what they need.

The Social Network Butterfly

- They are convinced that it's productive for them to remain online all day "building relationships" with customers. In fact, they spend countless hours engaged in non-productive activity.
- **How to cope:** Assign them measurable weekly goals to give purpose to these efforts.

Mr./Mrs. Boring

- They're always ready to give you a presentation you've heard before. They have a list of bullet points and are going to read each and every one to you!
- **How to cope:** Have a written agenda for every meeting with a limited amount of time for presentations. Consider a "no PowerPoint" rule for your meetings.

The Procrastinator

- They say yes to projects but fail to follow thru. As deadlines approach, they can't be found...even via email. When the work is finally turned in (often by others who have covered for them), they go on a mini vacation to "recuperate from the stress."
- **How to cope:** The best solution here is micromanagement. Lay out frequent (even daily) milestones and create consequences for missing one or failing to report that they missed it.

Troublesome Behaviors

The Ultra Competitor

- No matter how a situation plays out, no matter who gets hurt in the process, the ultra-competitor can't let it go until they are convinced that they won and, more importantly, that someone else has lost.
- **How to cope:** Get them focused on having the entire team win, rather than just themselves. If possible, pay them a bonus based on team achievement versus individual accomplishment.

The Drama King or Queen

- They turn everything into an emotional issue followed by resentment and grudges. They seem to draw energy from the drama while draining energy from everyone else.
- **How to cope:** Set up boundaries for the behavior that you won't tolerate. Dismiss them from any meeting where their behavior becomes obstructive.

The Creative Genius

- They are a legend in their own mind and are sure to make certain that everyone knows it. They always talk about the amazing stuff they did in the past and their equally amazing plans for the future. However, they seldom seem to actually do anything *today*.
- **How to cope:** Give some lip service to their greatness and then bring them down to earth by breaking a project into chunks and getting them to "consult" on each chunk.

The Panic Button

- Some people really shine in a crisis. Others remain calm until a problem has reached its inevitable conclusion...then they tell the office that the "sky is falling!"
- **How to cope:** Create an early warning system so that there are fewer surprises. Then deny them "regular" coffee on the day the bad news hits.

The Volcano

- They explode whenever things don't go the way they think they should. They scream at meetings, yell into the telephone, and get in your face. While they might apologize later, the whole team walks on eggshells.
- **How to cope:** Make your point in an assertive manner (or you won't be heard), and then refuse to put up with unprofessional behavior. If necessary, leave the room until they cool down.

Motivational Value System Clashes

Relationship Awareness Theory:

- *Behavior is motivated by a desire to achieve self worth*
- *Motivation changes in conflict*
- *Strengths overdone can become a weakness*
- *Our filters influence perception*

- **Nurturing**
 - *Being Needed and Being Appreciated*
 - People
 - Caring
 - Helpful

- **Assertive**
 - *Personal Advancement and Development*
 - Results
 - Tasks
 - Accomplishments

- **Analytical**
 - *Logic and Self Reliance*
 - Correction
 - Data and Information
 - Organization

- **Flexibility**
 - *Likes to Know and Be Known By People (and likes to be known as flexible)*
 - Team
 - Collaboration
 - Options

This page adapted from the Strengths Deployment Indicator, Personal Strengths Publishing, 2005.

Job Misery in 2013

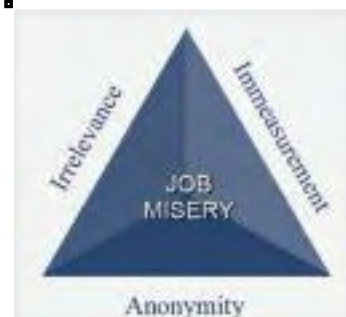
What does this graphic say/mean to you? Is the author an employee of your company?



Who is responsible for employees feeling this way?

What is your responsibility to get them to change their perception?

- **Anonymity**
- **Irrelevance**
- **Immeasurement**



Model from "The Three Signs of a Miserable Job". Patrick Lencioni, 2007.

Five Steps to Workplace Misery

1. Thinking everyone will/must get along.
2. Complaining about the same issues all the time.
3. Allowing your job to dictate your mood or state of mind.
4. Focusing on the negativity of your workplace.
5. Accepting or taking the wrong job.



Addressing Difficulty and Misery in Your Workplace

What can you do differently to deal with difficult employees?

How can you support these employees to improve their behavior?

What recommendations will you make to others?