End Corporate Bullying

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Workplace bullying in the corporate environment is prevalent. We discuss why workplace bullying can exist in the corporate environment, how workplace bullying impacts those affected, and suggestions for what to do when it occurs.

END CORPORATE BULLYING

Bullying in the corporate workplace is quite common according to Comaford (2016), who is an expert on business and entrepreneurship. It essentially serves to threaten, to intimidate and to isolate members of the corporate environment. As a result bullying can undermines one's reputation and job performance.

Imagine the following scenarios:

- A manager submits work to a vice-president who makes comments that discredit or devalue the work of the manager. The vice-president criticizes the manager, shows a lack of patience, and fails to demonstrate, in a sensitive, professional manner, how to proceed.
- A staff person is given an unreasonable workload schedule. She is emailed a note about completing a project that her supervisor told her to complete in one day.
- A supervisor makes cruel, insulting comments at a staff meeting about an employee's psychological problems.
- In the performance reviews of a staff member who is up for promotion, the manager undermines the staff member's professional standing and does not identify reasonable areas for improvement and ignores the staff member's contributions to the department.

In each of these examples bullying is an escalating process in which one or more individuals can create an unhealthy and unprofessional power imbalance between the one who is bullied and the bully. This can result in psychological and physical consequences for both the people who are targeted to be the bully, for co-workers, and for bystanders. Subsequently this situation will create monetary damage to a business when assignments are not completed efficiently and bullied workers leave.

First, Why Would Workplace Bullying Even Occur in a Corporate Environment?

- The CEO of the company demands rapid decisions and immediate responses from supervisors and managers. This causes undue pressure to respond immediately and can cause managers and supervisors be stressed around staff.
- Managers assign heavy workloads to their staff members, causing anxiety, tension and other physical and psychological symptoms in staff. As a result due to heavy workloads and rising,

demanding and competitive needs, staff don't get enough sleep as there is too much to do and too much to think about.
- As a result of the high demanding environment, managers may hyper-focus only on what needs to be done for the organization, and deny any general positive actions from staff, unrelated to the project at hand, nor notice if all employees on the team are treated properly with their safety in mind.
- Managers can exhibit control and power by exploiting others and can encourage a lack of teamwork between staff. In this way such managers focus on strengthening their own positions in the corporate environment.

Statistically, 75% of employees who responded to a survey (Comaford, 2016) have been affected by workplace bullying either as a target or as a bystander. So the humiliation and intimidation felt by the bully causes a feeling of being sabotaged, which is arranged by the bully and interferes with company deadlines, and with work which is expected to be done effectively. Poor management, irresponsible leadership and a lack of staff training exacerbates this issue. All of a sudden, the one who is bullied lacks meaning or purpose in their jobs (Hunter, 2014). The targets feel disengaged from work responsibilities and wants to call in sick. As a result the one who is bullied can exhibit:

Characteristics
- low morale
- "dropping out" episodes from the job
- headaches, tension and other physical and psychological symptoms
- blaming oneself for the issues occurring on the job
- being withdrawn from people in general and feeling lonely.

This is the result of a manager who bullies and who:
- insults others and makes offensive remarks
- shouts, yells, humiliates, ridicules
- finger points at staff who do not perform properly
- ignores staff who walk by the bully manager
- arbitrarily changes directions or tasks for the staff
- needs a victim to assert power by hurting, belittling or taking advantage of others in a "lower" rank than the bully.

We need to keep in mind this is all happening because of:
- high job demands
- limited job control
- organizational culture
- job insecurity
- acceptance of unreasonable workplace behaviors
- existing autocratic leadership styles
- lack of guidance given to staff.

Corporate Diagram
Pictorially the workplace then appears as follows in figures one and two:

FIGURE 1

High workplace demands ⟹ Workplace bullying

(Results from) ⇓ ⟋ (Leads to)

> 1. lack of resources
> 2. lack of employee training
> 3. inappropriate work schedules

FIGURE 2

Insufficient workplace relationships ⟹ Workplace bullying

(Results from) ⇓ ⟋ (Leads to)

> 1. poor communication from managers to staff
> 2. isolating individuals on staff
> 3. lack of support for isolated individuals
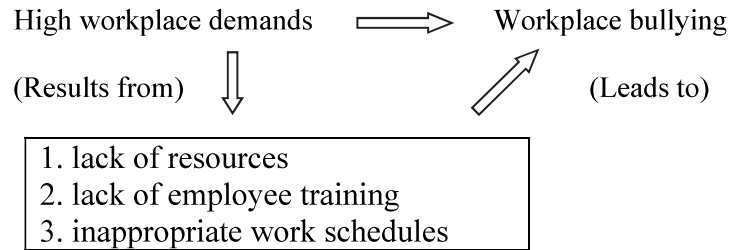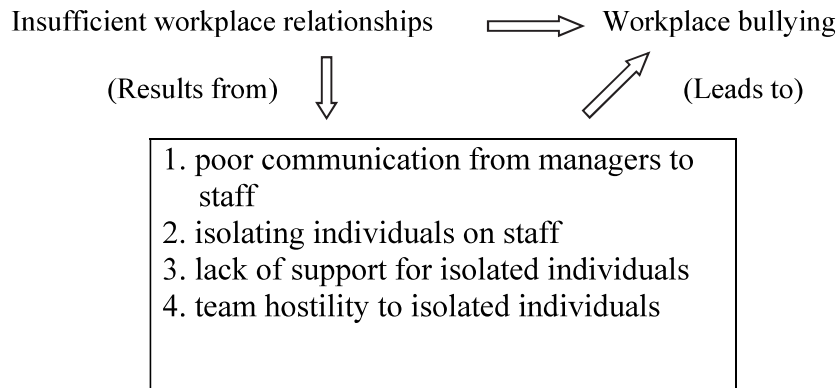> 4. team hostility to isolated individuals

Tactics Used by Bosses Who are Bullies

Some of the tactics used by bosses who are bullies in the corporate workplace include (Graham, 2014):

- threats, e.g. "I will fire you" or "I will make sure your salary is docked if you don't follow what I suggested."
- silent treatment, e.g. alienating a bullied staff member by ignoring them
- rumors/gossip, e.g. vicious statements that can hurt a staff member's reputation
- sabotage, e.g. insisting a staff member's work is the work of the boss or deleting pages from a staff member's report.

RESOLUTION

It is in the best interests of management in the corporate and entrepreneurial environments to promote ethical conduct and a positive workplace environment. Today especially in our technological age, bullies can express themselves online in such a way that doesn't directly confront the target face-to-face. What can you do when your boss bullies you in the corporate environment – some of these suggestions may or may not work, depending on your workplace climate (Gaetano, 2010):

- write a formal complaint to Human Resources at your corporation. Perhaps there already exists a Workplace Bullying Prevention policy at your company. If this doesn't work perhaps a Legal Aid Society in your area will deal with such incidents.
- build alliances with your co-workers to see if the bully has targeted them as well. This will help to document communication with the bully. If you meet with your manager who is a bully, to discuss the situation, have a third party serve as witness.
- check if your company has any policies for unethical behavior.

- if bullying stems from discrimination based on race, gender or other categories, targets can claim they are working in a hostile work environment, and then sexual harassment and title IX issues may apply, in this case.
- report the bullying to a more senior manager of the boss who bullies you, and explain to the more senior manager how bullying can affect employee turnover rate, lowered morale, and reduce productivity for the company.
- if Human Resources has a sexual harassment policy but not a complaint or anti-bullying policy, create an action plan that focuses on convincing senior executives to concentrate and invest in anti-bullying training, in order to improve organizational awareness of this issue and to develop a procedure that will estimate the costs of bullying in your company. Suggest that the company provide anti-bullying training for people working in the company.
- if Human Resources cannot help because of the high likelihood of retaliation, suggest choosing an ombudsperson who is objective about the culture in the corporation.

CONCLUSION

Bullying behavior and a toxic workplace is apparently one of the biggest underlying causes of disengagement in corporate America (Ross, 2017). It is important for the one who is bullied to realize that they did nothing wrong, and to stop acting like the victim. If your boss is a bully – consider the following:
- in front of your boss always show a positive attitude and do not show that the boss' behavior is affecting you directly.
- do not alienate yourself from your other colleagues in the office.
- do not respond to your boss by yelling back- remain calm.
- act in control of your actions.

It is significant for the corporation to focus on problem solving issues, in order to create clear and fair performance markers that reduce bullying (Comaford, 2016). It is ineffective for the corporation, if a bullied target experiences loss of confidence, increase in stress for its bystanders on the staff who witness the bullying of their colleague, so that bystanders choose whether to side with the bullied target or with the toxic culture created by their boss who bullies (Mattice, 2011).

By creating these performance markers the boss can listen to peers objectively, and can reward ideas expressed by his team, bringing safety measures into the boss' department, and instilling a fair exchange between the team members of the boss' department. Creating a culture which recognizes hard work, respects and trusts decisions made by peers in the department, as by maintaining a positive attitude, will help managers better tackle the organizational deadlines and demands of the global economy and reduce bullying in general, in their departments.

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