

Toxic Personalities. Civility. And the Bottom Line.

Leadership that Makes a Real Difference!

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Day in and day out, there is one issue that leaders either don't have the time to deal with or don't know how to resolve. One such problem that has often gone under the radar screen is dealing with toxic personalities. How pervasive is this problem?

- 94% of victims stated they work, or have worked, with a toxic person¹
- 50% believe they are not competent to respond to an uncivil person's verbal abuse²
- 68% reported a decline in performance; 78% stated less commitment to the organization³
- 92% rated their pain as being from 7-10 on a 10-point Likert scale; 42.5% rated it at 9-10⁴
- 12% of victims quit!⁵
- Fully loaded costs of staff turnover are 1.5 to 2.5 times the exited person's salary⁶.

This is just tip of the iceberg. There is tremendous emotional pain triggered when dealing with a toxic person. This quote from a participant in our research study reflects the relief experienced when the toxic person leaves:

"The day this person left our company is considered an annual holiday!"

Why is this problem often hidden in organizations?

- Uncivil behaviors, including bullying⁷, are on the rise as organizations run leaner during this economic downturn
- With leaner organizations, managers shift these performance issues to professionals.

Respectful engagement is not just about knowing how to react to these uncivil behaviors. While this is needed, it's not enough because these reactive strategies alone have little organizational impact. For example, our large-scale research study of over 400 leaders indicated that the strategy that leaders rely on most is feedback to the toxic individuals. Our research debunks this myth. Feedback often fails because most uncivil individuals are clueless they are toxic!

Unfortunately, "respectful engagement" has traditionally been seen as a "touchy-feely" and a "feel-good" kind of process. Until now. This session pinpoints our three core strategies to design communities of respectful engagement to increase both the bottom line and work-life satisfaction. Our *Toxic Organization Change System* (TOCS) includes:

¹ Kusy, M., & Holloway, E. (2009). *Toxic workplace! Managing toxic personalities and their systems of power*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

² Solfield, L., & Salmond, S. W. (2003). Workplace violence. *Orthopaedic Nursing*, 22(4), 274-283.

³ Porath, C. L., & Pearson, C. M. (2009). How toxic colleagues corrode performance. *Harvard Business Review*, 87(4), 24.

⁴ Kusy, M., & Holloway, E. (2009). *Toxic workplace! Managing toxic personalities and their systems of power*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

⁵ Pearson, C. M., Anderson, L. M., & Porath, C. L. (2000). Assessing and attacking workplace incivility. *Organizational Dynamics*, 29(2), 123-137.

⁶ Cascio, W. (2000). *Costing human resources (4th edition)*. Cincinnati: South-Western.

⁷ Hodson, R., Roscigno, V. J., & Lopez, S. H. (2006). Chaos and the abuse of power: Workplace bullying in organizational and interactional context. *Work and Occupations*, 33(4), 382-416.

- 1) Organizational strategies designed to:
 - help leaders apply the theory and practice of large-scale change to the design of concrete values that make a difference
 - create ways for them to assist their organization in integrating these core values into existing performance systems and strategic planning
 - design recruiting practices that reduce the risk of hiring a toxic person
 - create the culture to sustain excellence beginning at on-boarding time
 - promote a very unique and effective process of “skip-level” evaluations
 - use effective firing practices that work best when there’s a 50-50 split between achievement of job goals *and* organizational values
- 2) Team strategies designed to:
 - support leader’s use of proactive team interventions through:
 1. behavioral team selection using “BIG-FIVE” personality factors and better candidate assessment which is three times more profitable than increasing the size of the candidate pool and six times more profitable than convincing the candidate to accept a lower compensation package⁸
 2. translation of organizational values to accountable, team norms
 - assist these professionals in using effective reactive interventions
 1. 360-degree team assessment (not to be confused with 360-degree leadership assessment systems)
 2. ways to engage exit interviews in new ways
 3. processes to identify “toxic protectors” who enable uncivil behaviors to persist by excusing their behaviors because of:
 - a. Special relationships
 - b. Power
 - c. Productivity
 4. how to identify “toxic buffers” who shield the uncivil behaviors from others
- 3) Individual strategies designed to:
 - help leaders create effective targeted feedback methods
 - promote their use of “systems coaching”
 - engage the use of relevant authority with the toxic person (not to be confused with position authority!)
 - promote a fair process for termination as a result of uncivil behaviors
 - deal with the fact that most toxic persons are clueless of their effects in the organization and their resistance to change, as this quote from our study demonstrates: **“We have invested tens of thousands of dollars, hundreds of hours of HR and executive coaching interventions with no discernible results. I have never encountered such profound and robust resistance to feedback and coaching.”**

Finally, we address healing processes that these professionals must engage with individuals and teams in your organization—designed to restore each to healthy functioning. Our research has indicated that just because the uncivil person is gone doesn’t necessarily mean that their legacy is not! The healing strategies include:

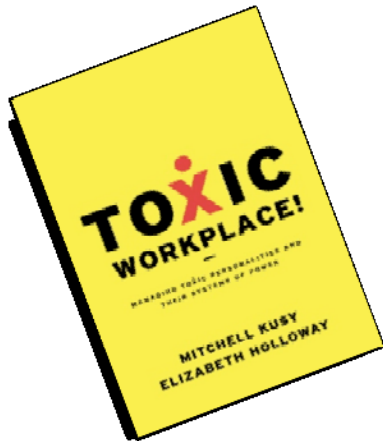
- 1) Leader and team renewal
- 2) “Values” benchmarking
- 3) Mentoring for cultural transformation
- 4) Innovative designs for communities of practice

⁸ Fernandez-Araoz, C., Groysenberg, B., & Nohria, N. (2009, May). The definitive guide to recruiting in good times and bad. *Harvard Business Review*, 74-84.

5) External coaching for leader healing

Following the seminar, there is an option of our hosting individual coaching sessions to help leaders retool their implementation strategies for specific purposes within their organization. For example, we'll help them better work with organizational leaders to do the following:

- 1) Help leaders understand the bottom-line impact of toxic behaviors and then **co-design policies of respectful engagement**.
- 2) Identify the **three types of "toxic protectors"** who enable toxicity.
- 3) Give feedback to **"toxic buffers"** who shield the team from the toxic person.
- 4) **Stop giving feedback only to the toxic person**; instead focus on understanding and intervening at the team and organizational system levels.
- 5) Use a large-scale change process for designing **concrete, behaviorally specific values of respectful engagement**; involve as many as feasible here.
- 6) Weave these values into daily performance expectations, hold all accountable, and give targeted feedback when these values are demonstrated *and* violated.
- 7) **Mentor** them on the significance of these behaviorally specific values for bottom-line results.
- 8) Use **360-degree team assessment systems**, not just 360-degree leader feedback, to positively influence team behaviors.
- 9) Use **skip-level evaluations** to assure robust adherence to the values by all in the organization; create realistic guidelines so the process is not abused.
- 10) Integrate this process into **strategic planning** venues.
- 11) Retool the **exit interviewing process** to uncover toxic contexts and then remedy them
- 12) Garner organizational sanctions such that no one is exempt from organizational civility, where the organizational norm becomes one of:
 - a. **No pit bulls**
 - b. **No prima donnas**
 - c. **No chameleons who kiss-up and kick-down**
 - d. **No organizational stars who get away with tyranny!**



At the end of this seminar, participants will receive a complimentary, signed copy of their latest book *Toxic Workplace! Managing Toxic Personalities and Their Systems of Power*, which has just been released. A brief description of their backgrounds may be found on the next page.