

Talent Management Excellence

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GETTING WOMEN'S NETWORKS RIGHT

Are women's networking groups confused?
Selena Rezvani

When Bullies Grow Up

Workplace Bullying.

 By Brian Martin

Over the past five years, I've noticed a dramatic increase in colleagues describing deplorable work experiences with their managers, peers, and sometimes direct reports. Many of their experiences mirror my own which prompted my journey to discover more about workplace bullying and the negative impact it has on high performing individuals, teams, and organizations. I recently had the opportunity to spend three days with Dr. Gary Namie, and his wife Dr. Ruth Namie in Bellingham Washington.

They are North American pioneers that have devoted their lives to understanding the causes of workplace bullying as well as helping individuals and organizations address the issue head on. They have written several books on the topic; "The Bully at Work" and "The Bully Free Work Place".

WHEN BULLIES GROW UP

Workplace Bullying (Harassment) is repeated and persistent, health-harming mistreatment by an individual (bully) that takes one or more of the following forms:

- **Verbal abuse**
- **Offensive conduct and/or behaviors (including non-verbal) which are threatening, humiliating, or intimidating**
- **Interference or sabotage that prevents work from getting done**

All bullying involves control of others (**targets**), by perpetrators (**bullies**) who either take harmful actions against others or withhold social or material resources. It differs from school yard bullying in that targets are often high performing and don't necessarily make up the most vulnerable within the work population. Bullies select targets *not because of what they do*, but because of *who they are*. It happens at all levels within an organization though a 2007 National study by the Workplace Bullying Institute indicates 72% of bullies are in a leadership role.

WORKPLACE BULLYING...

- Results in a variety of harmful and often long term consequences for the target(s) and negatively impacts the organization including:
 - decreased employee engagement
 - increased employee turnover
 - increased short and long term absenteeism costs
 - negative employer reputation
 - failing to achieve to business objectives
 - Is driven by the bully's need to control the targets.
 - Escalates to involve others who side with the bully, either voluntarily or through coercion; others stand by silently even when bully behavior is expressed openly.
- Undermines legitimate business interests when bullies' personal agendas take precedence over business objectives.
- Is akin to domestic violence in the workplace where the abuser often holds a position of influence within the organization.

Targets struggle trying to understand why they have been singled out, while coping and addressing the issue head on. They are led to believe their work performance is substandard despite years of accomplishments and above average performance

reviews. In response to the harassment, they often work harder and longer at great personal sacrifice only to find the unrealistic demands placed on them continue to grow as the perpetrator undermines their confidence (often isolating them from peers and support systems).

Long term effects include a wide range of physical and emotional ailments including depression, and in some cases (PTSD). Bullying is not about an isolated incident where a bully is having a bad day. For the target it's a persistent and pervasive experience that severely undermines their confidence and self-worth.

CANADA'S RESPONSE

Canada has been more proactive than our U.S. counterparts by passing legislation which further confirms the extent to which bullying has taken hold in today's workplace. American targets have even less protection and recourse due to the broad application of the American "at-will" laws that permit employers to terminate employees for any reason without notice.

- In 2004, Quebec enacted the first North American statutory law against psychological harassment (bullying) at work.
- In 2007 Saskatchewan added an anti-bullying provision to its Occupational Health and Safety Code.
- In 2008 a revision was made to the Canada Labour Code mandating anti-bullying policies and education within all federal ministries.
- In 2010, Ontario passed a law (Bill 168) addressing workplace violence and workplace harassment.

It will be important for ALL provinces and territories to embrace legislation.

WHAT WE KNOW

In a national 2007 U.S. study, the Workplace Bullying Institute found that 78% of bullied targets did not formally report their abuse though they may have *informally* complained. The same study indicates that when situations were formally reported, organizations *failed to respond* (44%) or the *situation worsened* based on the company's actions (18%).

In the 2012 Study "Target Strategy Effectiveness" by the Workplace Bullying Institute, the outcome for targets was dismal with 78% no longer being employed by the company once the bullying stopped.

- 28% Quit
- 25% Fired
- 25% Forced Out
- 11% Transferred

In contrast, the same study indicates that only 11% of perpetrators suffered consequences:

- 6% Disciplined
- 5% Fired

Open Door Programs fail because bullies are often skilled at managing up and covertly garner support of Human Resources, Peers, and Senior Management eroding the effectiveness of organizational support systems - leaving targets with few alternatives and little hope their situation will change. Targets in

Saskatchewan, Ontario and Quebec have greater recourse but I suspect the experience still has negative and lingering effects. **ORGANIZATIONS HAVE A CHOICE**

Failing to adequately identify, respond to, and eliminate Workplace Bullying has far reaching, harmful consequences that are physical, mental, social, and economic in nature.

Workplace bullying is difficult to safeguard against. Organizations serious about enhancing employee engagement and the correlation to customer retention must develop a holistic approach to eradicate workplace bullying. A comprehensive program should:

- regularly monitor the company climate to identify bully

behavior

- encourage safe reporting of incidents supported by neutral and impartial investigations
- include protection for targets
- define consequences for perpetrators
- be enveloped within a leadership culture that embraces a zero tolerance policy. **ITM**



Brian Martin, Managing Director at *Made to Measure HR Solutions based in Toronto, Ontario to learn more. In his previous roles as a Human Resources Vice President with major Canadian & International Retail companies, Brian helped transform leaders, teams, and organizations.

The Talent Transition Train

Effective succession planning forms the foundation of any organization

 By Katie Day

Without a solid, strategic plan in place, organizations run the risk of, at best stagnation, and at worse collapse.



As any sales person knows, you are only as good as your last sale. Organizations are only as good as their last Leadership Team.

So, what might get in the way of creating succession plans that do what they say they can?

During my 25 years of experience working with organizations, from mid size to multi nationals, I have witnessed the same stumbling blocks. These are regardless of sector, size of organization or geographical location.

What can get in the way is fear. Fear from the existing leadership team that the talent coming up behind them is better; fear that the talent coming up behind them *isn't* good enough; fear of losing control and, therefore, the kudos that comes with status. How this emotion usually manifests is with the external presentation of arrogance. Arrogance covers the internal belief of 'not being good enough'. As we know, all bullies are cowards, they attack first in the belief this is the route to stop them being attacked by others. The antics of the school yard rarely disappear simply because the perpetrator is now wearing a business suit – skirt or trousers!

So, back the title. How to move new talent into leadership positions and ride the talent transition train with ease and grace.

Firstly, organizations need to take a good long look at their current leadership team.

- How effective are they at working together as a real team?
- Are there any ineffective / inappropriate behavior traits that need to be addressed?
- Are there any dominant characters that are leading the team in the wrong direction?
- Who are the excellent role models and how are they being utilised for the good of the organization?
- Does the current leadership team operate a 'command and control' style or a 'mentoring and coaching' style?

Every change, whether personal or organizational, has to start with ownership. All existing leadership teams *have* to take ownership of their personal style, their personal effectiveness and their personal message via their behavior. They must be aware of their core values and ensure they live them every day with every decision, communication and interaction.

Once this, fundamental, stage has been completed, it is then crucial that an organization ensures it has the right training programs and mentoring schemes in place. The biggest mistake I have seen happen is organizations promoting good