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10 Commandments for Dealing with Workplace Negativity

Negativity in the workplace comes in many forms. It could be that you have a co-worker who continually complains or gossips about others. It could be that your supervisor is very demanding with no flexibility. It could also be that management isn't interested in any input from the front-line workers on how to make their organization better.

Negativity in the workplace is becoming extremely common in organizations today. Many say it is because of the disillusionment that employees have with their jobs. Others say it is due to the fast-paced changes everyone is dealing with on the job. Regardless of why the negativity is in the organization, I want to show you 10 ways to reduce negativity and increase employee morale.

1. Thou shalt determine which department, shift, or work area is experiencing the most negativity.

Determining where the negativity is originating from is common knowledge in most organizations. Employees know that certain departments, shifts, or work areas tend to spread distorted information. After pinpointing the source of the negativity, you have the opportunity to use some of the other commandments to stop or reduce it. You will never stop all negative comments from your workforce, but you can reduce and isolate them.

2. Thou shalt turn up the listening skills

The art of listening is important with overcoming negativity. Listening allows workers to complain

in a manner that will get results or increase their understanding of why something is happening. Many good workers just want to talk about something and express their concerns. Being concerned means they care about doing a good job. Creating a forum that creates an open environment to give feedback, even if it is negative, will reduce gossip overall.

3. Thou shalt equip people prior to a change.

Equipping employees with the skills they need prior to making a change is sometimes difficult to do. In many cases, we do not know what training might be needed until the change has been implemented. However, if we stay on top of potential changes and brainstorm solutions with managers and those employees who actually do the work, one might be surprised what ideas will surface.

4. Thou shalt allow employees to regularly have access to all levels of management.

Visibility of management helps workers feel they have access to decision makers. Many employees will not talk to upper management, but feel they could if they wanted to, and this gives them the

I think we manifest the very thing we put out.
If you're putting out negativity, then you're
going to retrieve that same sentiment. If you
emanate joy, it comes back to you.

Robin Wright
Actress

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perception of access. One thing that is not working is telling workers your door is always open for them if they want to talk. This places all the initiative on the worker. Many employees, while they are excellent workers, do not have the same people skills that upper management possesses. To come into upper management's turf is very intimidating and fearful. Management must make themselves visible and accessible.

5. Thou shalt involve workers in brainstorming the implementation of all changes.

When workers inherit plans, but are not asked to give input, they become negative and cynical. Many plans made in the boardroom are not realistic

for frontline implementation. Workers who give input during the implementation stage are experts on what will work in their area. They can give ideas that will speed up the plan and highlight concern areas. To make workers implement without input will cause them to anticipate the project will fail.

We've only made it through half of the commandments! This month, work on implementing some of these tips. Next month we'll look at the second half.

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THE MATHIS GROUP, INC

9515 N. Spring Valley Dr.
Pleasant Hope, MO 65725
800-224-3731
417-759-9110 voice/fax

wanda@themathisgroup.com

keith@themathisgroup.com

www.themathisgroup.com

www.pmexpertlive.com

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