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10 Commandments for Dealing with Workplace Negativity, Part 2

Last month, I challenged you to implement at least one of the first five commandments we looked at. How did it go? Were you able to tell a difference in the weeks following? If not, that's ok. Changing the attitudes of employees can be hard. Let's look at the remaining five commandments to give you additional tools to use.

6. Thou shalt determine if the company bears part of the responsibility for the rumors and negativity.

Is the organization doing things that increase negativity? If an organization is disrespectful to employees, then they bear some of the responsibility. Workers will not take risks if they are fearful of being reprimanded. We want our employees to evaluate new ways of doing business and new ways of solving a problem. If management is disrespectful to employees, then the organization bears part of the responsibility for the negativity.

7. Thou shalt praise good work skills.

Don't we all love it when people acknowledge when what we are doing a good job? Recently, while eating in a restaurant, I noticed the waitress for our section was extremely efficient in her duties. I told her how impressed I was with the service she was delivering. Her smile and kindness followed the praise almost immediately. Did I receive bad service after those comments? Absolutely not! She took a personal interest in meeting every request for refills, extra napkins, and, of course, dessert. Your employees are no different. They want to

know they are doing a good job and that it is being noticed.

8. Thou shalt create a code of conduct.

A code of conduct is a list of values or behaviors that a team, department, or entire company agrees on as to how they will treat each other. We recommend that it be 10 sentences or less. You want the code to be easily remembered. Possible examples are:

- We will disagree agreeably.
- We will not interrupt when another is talking.
- We will seek to build up and not put down.
- We will be honest and respectful.

9. Thou shalt increase communication with information about the organization's goals and direction.

Increasing communication can help reduce negative comments by uninformed workers. Prior generations felt no need to communicate with their workers. An old school philosophy believed that employees were hired not to think, but to do what supervisors said. Today, employees make the organization successful by solving problems and being creative thinkers. In order to encourage this, one must regularly communicate to clarify new information and changes.

Negativity spreads faster than any
Justin Bieber song.
Vanilla Ice
Musician

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10. Thou shalt confront those who are verbally harming others.

Confronting others is not fun; however, it must be part of dealing with workplace negativity. Confrontations should be used as a last resort after attempting several of the previous commandments. If an employee continues to contaminate others with negativity, confrontation is unavoidable. Without it, the situation will usually escalate instead of getting better. Several rules of engagement will assist you in confronting the negaholic:

- Do your homework before the confrontation. Know how often they negatively talk about events and to whom they are talking. When it is time, discuss the concerns in private.
- Discuss specific performance or behaviors. Don't discuss gray areas of attitudes, but

specific, documented instances where their performance or behavior needed adjusting.

- Remain calm regardless of what they do. Many workers will get upset when confronted.
- Stay focused on this one employee. When the worker feels confronted, they may blame others. Do not chase this rabbit. You are there to discuss the behavior and performance of this employee, not others.

I hope these commandments will help you reduce the amount of negativity you have to deal with in your organization.

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