

Bulletin Board: Bullying leads to high costs for companies

by Amy Winter

Bullying isn't limited to only the classroom or the playground. Almost 29 percent of human resource executives have seen one or more of their employees quit as a result of workplace bullying, according to the global outplacement agency Challenger, Gray & Christmas Inc., which surveyed 100 HR professionals. One-third of the executives have seen bullying firsthand or experienced it.

This workplace problem affects companies due to lost productivity, low morale, legal costs and employee turnover.

"Statistically, bullying is far more prevalent than sexual harassment, workplace violence or racial discrimination," said John A. Challenger, chief executive officer of the agency. "And the long-term costs to the organization are significant. Yet bullying remains one of the most overlooked problems by management and the courts.

"This is probably due in large part to the fact that qualities like aggression, a survival-of-the-fittest spirit, and a win-at-all-costs approach are often rewarded in business. These qualities may have their place, but more and more companies are learning - with Enron serving as the poster child - that overemphasizing these qualities can be detrimental."

Companies are taking a stand against bullies. Eighty-three percent of the executives, who admitted that an employee quit, reported that disciplinary action occurred against the offender. However, when fighting back against the offenders, companies deal with large costs related to the loss of employees.

"Each company that loses an employee due to a workplace bully has to replace that person," said Challenger. "The cost of replacement can be as high as 150 percent of the former worker's salary, when you take into account the cost of recruiting, training, lost customer service, etc. In a tight labor market like the one we are in now, the cost may be even higher."

Some companies are able to eliminate bullies by developing a corporate environment where such behavior is not allowed.

"It is in a company's best interest to identify bullies and coach them to change their ways, or failing that, remove them," said Challenger.

For more information, visit www.challengergray.com.

WORK WITH FRIENDS

Social time at work can have its benefits with on-the-job performance, even if it can become distracting when under deadline. Fifty-seven percent of executives reported that productivity improves when co-workers are friends outside of work, according to a survey completed by Accountemps, a staffing firm, in which 150 senior executives and 519 full- or part-time workers participated. Approximately 63 percent of the surveyed employees agreed with the executives.

Befriending co-workers on the job was a different issue. While 22 percent of employees felt this issue as strongly positive toward productivity, only 2 percent of managers answered the same. Executives were more willing to admit that being friends on the job was somewhat positive to the working environment, 55 percent identified with this response.

"Colleagues who are friends are more likely to support one another when presented with challenges or new responsibilities, enhancing workflow and team spirit," said Max Messmer, chairman of Accountemps and author of "Motivating Employees for Dummies."

"It's especially important for new employees to have the opportunity to build rapport with staff members," he added. "Those who are able to form friendships early on the job are likely to acclimate quickly and stay on board for the long term."

For more information, visit www.accountemps.com.

DADS DESIRE STAY-AT-HOME POSITION

Many dads would rather spend the day with their children than at the office. Thirty-seven percent of working dads say they would quit their jobs if their wife's or partner's wage could support the family, according to a survey completed by CareerBuilder.com in which 1,521 full-time dads participated. Another 38 percent would be willing to take a pay cut in order to have more time at home.

Twenty-four percent of the working dads sense that their relationship with their children is negatively affected by work. In the last year, 48 percent of the dads missed an important event in their child's life. Twenty-seven percent admit to working more than 50 hours a week, while 25 percent only spend one hour a

day with their kids.

Some of the dads feel their company does not offer manageable working arrangements in order to better balance work and family.

Richard Castellini, CareerBuilder.com's vice president of consumer marketing and father of three, offers these suggestions to working dads:

- Keep in touch with children while at work.

- Give your full attention to your children while at home.

- Schedule a weekly event to spend time with the family.

- Plan a lunch where employees can bring their children to the office.

For more information, visit www.careerbuilder.com.

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