

## 5 Bad Habits Exhibited by a Dysfunctional Workplace Culture

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There are dysfunctional workplaces and there are dysfunctional workplace cultures. What is the difference, you wonder? A dysfunctional workplace is an environment where the quality of work that meets customer expectations and needs is practically unachievable. Places such as these do not remain in business too long; and if they do, for whatever bizarre reason, they continuously lose customers and gradually lose market share. On the other hand, a dysfunctional workplace culture refers to an unpleasant social and cultural nature of a work environment. Such an environment may cater to the needs of (some) customers; however, working there may prove to be a nightmare for many of the employees.

One may wonder then that as long as customer needs are being met, who cares about the nature of the workplace culture. The following people would care: the CEO or president, the board of directors, and the shareholders. But, most importantly are the employees and managers that desire to work hard and serve the needs of customers to the best of their abilities—the type of employees that every employer hopes for. Many of such employees and managers will not remain loyal to an employer that maintains an unhealthy workplace culture.

There are several bad habits that characterize a dysfunctional workplace culture. Five of these follow.

### **The Importance of a Healthy Workplace Culture**

**Research studies have linked organizational culture to organizational performance. Respect among employees has been shown to be a value component of a workplace culture.**

### **One — A “silo” mentality.**

A workplace “silo” mentality refers to the following mindset: *This is our turf; stay away.* This is a typical attitude that is rooted in the functional organizational structure (functional silos) that characterized many companies in the 70’s, 80’s and most of the 90’s. And, surprisingly, the mentality prevails even till today. You can tell that a work environment exhibits this habit when upper management and middle management employees discourage inter-departmental cooperation at any level, or when rigid structures and bureaucratic measures—red tape—exist that discourage inter-departmental cooperation.

### **Two — Warring factions.**

It is a known fact that the human race is characterized by conflict. Nations engage in conflict and war. Ethnic groups, tribal groups, neighborhoods, families, family members, and friends all engage in different sorts of conflict. The workplace is no exception—ripe with conflicts of all kinds, especially psychological conflict. When workplace conflict rises to the level where groups of employees (two or more) band together to go after another group (of

employees), then you have a case of warring factions. This type of situation sometimes creates a spectacle and almost always leads to diminished productivity; and, at times, even much worse.

### **Three — Too many unskilled managers.**

Every work environment needs managers. And, every young employee or supervisor looks forward to that prized promotion to a manager role. A manager is a skilled individual responsible for coordinating and managing the work output of a group of people in a manner that ensures efficiency and quality outcomes—the operative word in this statement being “skilled.” However, many workplaces are filled with individuals who lack the skills to be effective managers. In most of these cases, these individuals simply lack adequate training. Many lack time management, resource planning, effective communication, team building, basic process analysis, and basic risk management skills. Yet, these unskilled managers are put in charge of groups of other employees charged with work for which they (the employees) will be held accountable!

### **Four — Mediocre standards.**

A major difference between a workplace culture that supports average performance and a workplace culture that sustains high performance can be observed in workplace standards. Such standards can include communication protocol, workplace policies, motivation factors, recruitment norms, performance measures, reward system, and more. In some cases, work environments simply lack standards in many areas. Employees ultimately establish their own standards, leading to an increased likelihood of conflicting workplace sub-cultures.

### **Five — Too few leaders.**

Just as every work environment needs managers, every work environment needs leaders. More so, organizations need leaders at every level—not just at the top. While management skills differ significantly from leadership skills, an effective manager can also be a leader—an individual with leadership qualities. When a work environment lacks ample leaders at various levels, then there are not enough people communicating the organization’s vision; there are not enough people taking a brave stand or setting the right example on critical matters and events; and there are not enough people upholding the standards that foster high performance. There are just people doing jobs for which they want to get paid!

## **About the Author**



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