

Wellness Bulletin

January 2020

Creating a Respectful Workplace

RESPECTFUL COMMUNICATION

is important in creating a workplace environment that discourages workplace bullying. So, how do employees in organisations display respect? By getting along with others, being courteous and welcoming to other people, whether similar or different to you. Mostly, it is about conducting oneself in a way that helps others to feel safe and secure.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO BUILD & MAINTAIN RESPECTFUL WORKPLACES?

In workplaces people need to work together. Effective relationships based on respect will be the most effective way to achieve common goals, elicit the best work from all staff and maintain good employee mental health.

In their book *The Power of Moments*, Chip and Dan Heath identify four elements that create defining moments, including connection. In short, “defining moments are social.” Regardless of our personality type, we feel most engaged at work in moments that draw us together with our colleagues. Further research has shown that people

who are high in purpose but low in passion about their jobs, perform much better at work than the inverse (high in work passion, but low in purpose).

Heath and Heath write “Passion is individualistic... It can energise us, but also isolate us because my passion isn’t your passion.” By contrast, purpose is something people can share. It can knit groups together. As a result, work performance is fuelled by the collective sense of moving towards a goal, not an individual desire to be in a particular role.

FEELING GOOD BEING AT WORK

If a respectful workplace is one that allows you to feel good about being there, then it is useful to ask if there are any business advantages to feeling good at work and with getting along with each other.

ProActive ReSolutions (a company focused on building more respectful behaviour between people) shares their findings of a workplace questionnaire his company conducted.

The results highlighted that having respectful workplace policies doesn’t guarantee respectful behaviour.

58% of respondents out of 8,000 employees and managers who responded to the questionnaire said their organisations hadn’t prepared them to respond appropriately when they were being treated with disrespect.

32% said they were aware of two to five past incidents of disrespectful behaviour.

These findings highlight the need to do more than just create respectful workplace policy manuals.



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A RESPECTFUL WORKPLACE CAN BE DESCRIBED AS ONE WHERE PEOPLE

- Get along with each other
- Greet each other and are polite and courteous
- Include colleagues in conversations, events, coffee etc.
- Have social conversations as well as work conversations
- Are comfortable talking - or not talking – about personal things at work, depending on the individual
- Do what they say they will do – when they say they will
- Talk to each other and attempt to resolve locally any day-to-day disagreements and any hiccups in the way they get along
- Gently call out poor behaviour
- Are mindful of each other's opinions and beliefs
- Have high expectations of each other
- Invest time and effort in helping each other get along
- See things getting out of control and step in to help each other out

Moments that make us emotional also tend to feel meaningful. Rebecca Fraser-Thill, a career coach says, “moments that make us feel engaged, joyful, amazed and motivated are seen as emotional peaks. We tend to remember and feel deep gratitude for these peak experiences” (Forbes Newsletter Aug 2019).

Interestingly, though, the feelings need not be positive for us to experience meaning. Our current bushfire tragedy highlights many instances when firemen and women experienced mixed or even negative emotions whilst at work yet, recalling those moments as being highly meaningful. For instance, firemen and women they interviewed said they experienced intense meaning and purpose while trying to save a family house from being burnt down.

Joe Moore from ProActive ReSolutions offers the following 6 tips to build a respectful workplace:

- 01** Redistribute your workplace behaviour and conduct policies often and talk about them in different ways, for example via the intranet, team meetings and in performance reviews.
- 02** Make workplace behaviour and conduct competencies part of your hiring and performance reviews for all employees.
- 03** Make your relationship management competencies part of your hiring and performance reviews for all managers.
- 04** Train your people in how to solve their day-to-day disagreements informally – that should take care of the majority of issues that come up and prevent them from progressing to a formal grievance stage.
- 05** Train your people in the formal processes for addressing issues that cannot be solved informally.
- 06** Include in your policies a requirement to behave respectfully and collaboratively and in ways consistent with your organisation's values.

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