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# **Toxic Employees: Prevalence, Problems & Types**

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# Toxic Employees

- Toxic employees, or persons in the workplace with extremely difficult personalities, are quite prevalent. *It is estimated that about 15% of employees can be considered 'toxic.'* These employees are challenging persons with whom to work and to attempt to lead.
- Toxic employees pose several difficulties in the workplace. They often underperform and make work more difficult for other employees, thus lowering their productivity.
- Toxic employees strongly contribute to a workplace environment that is emotional and negative, and are commonly in conflict with co-workers and bosses. These employees are more likely to bully and abuse others at work.
- Toxic employees can be quite litigious, and efforts to coach or terminate them must follow careful and best practices.

— Source: Ettner, Maclean, & French (2011)

# Toxic Employees

- Three types of toxic employees appear to be the most common. They are persons with:
  - Antisocial Personalities
  - Paranoid Personalities, or
  - Obsessive-Compulsive Personalities
- Each 'toxic type' is comprised of employees who exhibit particular clusters of behaviors and attitudes.
- Once alerted to each type, it is common for persons in workplaces to say “Oh yeah, we have people like that around here!”

— Source: Ettner, Maclean, & French (2011)

# Toxic Managers

Effective managers need to have strong interpersonal and leadership skills which permit them to develop and retain the support of their faculty. Collegiality and trust are essential qualities to advance and intimidation and bullying are dysfunctional and counterproductive to the mission of a good manager. Organizations value collaboration and consensus building.

— Source: Pedowitz v. UCLA (2014)

# Toxic Managers

Even when a manager is brought in to take corrective action these same principles still apply – and even more so. Industrial psychologists have determined the importance of employee engagement in change management and organizational development.

– Source: Pedowitz v. UCLA (2014)

# Toxic Employees: Some Remedies

- Termination: Document, Document, Document!
  - Keep all documentation (including e-mails) regarding toxic employees *behavioral*, rather than personal
- Coaching: Focus on specific, and most disruptive, behaviors that need to change, rather than attempting broader change
- Effective Hiring (Blackman, 2008)
  - Comprehensive interview, involving multiple interviewers, formats, and settings is best for identifying red flags for applicants, that may indicate that an applicant would be a toxic employee.
  - If interviewers are in any way uncomfortable with an applicant, in terms of the applicant's verbal and non-verbal behaviors, the interviewers should be "safe rather than sorry" and probably not hire the applicant.

# Thank You for Your Attention!

More questions? Contact...

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