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How Good Managers Deal with Gossip in the Workplace

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Excessive gossip in the workplace hurts productivity, morale and engagement. Eventually it increases a company's turnover rate as high-performing employees become frustrated. Malicious gossip could even result in lawsuits against your company.

An important part of management is shutting down negative gossip in the workplace before employees start to distrust each other, which can lead to a breakdown in communication and teamwork. [Improve your management skills](#) by understanding the problem and using the

following tips to stop the spread of negative gossip.

Why Is Workplace Gossip So Common?

When employees start to feel comfortable with each other, they begin to share personal information about themselves. Employees can sometimes mishandle the information by sharing it with other coworkers. Once gossip starts to pervade the workplace, productivity and teamwork suffer.

Conflict arises when gossip is negative. This can be hurtful and damage professional relationships. But what causes gossip to occur in the workplace? Often, just like in the selling relationship, there is a “pain” involved. The employee is unhappy with an aspect of their work or personal lives and reacts by sharing this pain. Once you discover what the root of the employee’s unhappiness, you can begin to fix the problem.

Identify and Talk to the Key Gossipers

Address employees contributing to gossip problems head-on. Set up a meeting to talk in a place where other employees will not overhear, which could make the situation worse. A confidential, safe space prevents embarrassment for the employee.

Help employees understand the impact of negative gossip and how their involvement directly contributed to the issue. Many people are unaware of how their actions affect others, causing unanticipated conflicts. To prevent the employee from feeling targeted, allow them to explain their side of the story. Sometimes managers get a truncated version of office gossip. Knowing the full story helps you deal with the gossip objectively and [resolve the conflict](#).

When multiple people are involved, address gossipers one-on-one instead of in a group. Allowing people to privately share their information gives you a better chance of learning the truth. Plus, discussing the issue in a group may embarrass employees and prevent them from trusting you in the future.

Get to the Root of the Problem

Work together with the entire group to gain feedback and change the office culture accordingly. Gossip can be a symptom of a larger, more pervasive problem in the workplace. If this problem affects the entire office, your employees quickly lose focus on their work. Look for unifying causes when multiple instances of gossip occur and focus on addressing those problems.

One issue that managers face when dealing with idle chatter is hearing the gossip second-hand. To get to the root of the problem, you need to get the story directly from the source. While getting different sides of the story is helpful, believing everything you hear is not. Take second-hand information with a healthy dose of skepticism and wait to discuss the problem until you have gotten the full story.

Once you are certain you have the truth, avoid making accusations, as this leads to defensive behavior. Instead, approach the perpetrators with the simple facts. If you can prove that the

employee has been spreading malicious gossip, the problem becomes a disciplinary action.

Address and document the problem so that you have proof of the incident. Make sure the employee knows that gossip will not be tolerated in the office, and that future instances could result in severe punishment or even termination.

Set the Example

Never participate in negative gossip in the workplace. To be an effective manager, **act as an example** of the behavior you expect. Leading by example sets the tone for the office and shows your employees that you do not consider yourself above your rules. Employees will become frustrated and stop respecting your leadership if you are hypocritical about following rules you put in place.

Changing bad habits is never easy, especially your own, but when employees look to you for how to behave, provide a positive example. Setting the tone for positive office conversation prevents employees from inadvertently spreading negative gossip.

Encourage Positive Gossip



Sharing individual and team wins encourages positive gossip in the workplace. Positive gossip reinforces a strong team bond and improves morale. Employees feel proud of the work they've done and enjoy the recognition for their professional achievements.

Set aside time at staff meetings and allow employees to share positive gossip. Public sharing encourages team building and creates a cycle of positive behavior. Employees feel motivated to

reach company goals. Although money is a strong motivator, public praise can be equally rewarding for some people.

Addressing negative gossip in the workplace keeps your team focused on producing results instead of nurturing anger and resentment. Effective managers notice the first signs of gossip and stop the time-wasting conversations before they spread. By meeting privately with both the individuals involved, you set ground rules and explain expectations for your management. Instead of simply stopping gossip, focus on changing the conversation to discuss the positives and highlight the successes of your team.

Tags:

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Share this article:**Steve Howell**

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