

# Communication

## Bulletin <sup>TM</sup> for Managers & Supervisors

A fast-read source of information to help managers communicate better within and between departments, twice a month.

March 16, 2020



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## Stop bullying behavior in its tracks: 5 proven tactics

*How to identify – and respond to – bad apples*

**Y**ou have a bully in your workplace. We don't know his name. We don't know what she looks like. But we know there's a bully.

About 60% of employees know bullying goes on at work – 20% have been the target and 20% witness it firsthand. The rest just know it happens, the Workplace Bullying Institute found.

But hardly anybody does anything to stop the humiliation, intimidation, threats, sabotage and verbal abuse that constitutes bullying.

As a manager or supervisor, that's your job.

### Know the difference

First, know the difference between bullying and harassment. They're similar because both

are severe or pervasive behavior that creates a bad work environment. Bullying can happen to anyone for any reason. Problem is, it *isn't* illegal. Harassment crosses the legal line because the victim is targeted for protected characteristics such as gender, race or age.

Both are bad, but harassment needs to be put in HR's hands immediately.

### 4 kinds of bullies

Bullies come in all forms. These are the most common ones who managers should keep an eye out for:

**The Critic.** He disparages victims – sometimes publicly but more often privately

*Please see **Bullying ...** on Page 2.*

### *Sharpen Your Judgment*

## Female worker 'promoted' with no pay raise

**"T**here's a wage freeze?" asked Susan. "That's two years in a row."

"I know," said Steve, her manager. "Our industry's still bouncing back."

"I understand that. But I also have a problem," Susan replied.

"OK. Let's hear it," Steve said.

"I was promoted two years ago without a raise, even though I replaced Allan, who made significantly more than I did. I was led to believe I'd be compensated after I proved myself.

"And I believe I have," she finished.

"I hear what you're saying. But this isn't about whether you've proven yourself. It's about

the economic reality," Steve said.

Susan nodded. "I guess I can accept that. But I hope we have a different conversation soon."

"I hope so, too," Steve replied.

### Is discrimination claim plausible?

Susan was later fired for an unrelated reason. When she was denied severance pay, she claimed it was an act of gender discrimination since male employees had received severance in the past.

She sued under The Equal Pay Act, saying the company violated her rights by not giving her the same compensation as her male counterparts.

Did she win?

This regular feature sharpens your thinking and helps keep both you and your firm out of trouble. It describes a real legal conflict and lets you judge the outcome.

*Make your decision, then please turn to Page 4 for the court's ruling.*

### **The Purpose of Communication Bulletin for Managers & Supervisors**

Communication Bulletin for Managers & Supervisors provides relevant and actionable business ideas to help managers and supervisors improve communication and increase effectiveness.

The Bulletin helps improve communication within and between departments, a major goal for most businesses seeking better performance.

All in a fast-read format, twice a month.

## Bullying ...

(continued from Page 1)

in meetings or through email or text – until victims question their abilities and start to perform worse.

**The Aggressor.** She yells and intimidates. Others avoid her so they aren't the next victim.

**The Gatekeeper.** He excludes people and withholds information to prevent victims from doing their jobs.

**The Backstabber.** She's nice to victims' faces and undermines, sabotages or talks badly behind their backs.

### 5 keys to dealing with bullies

Whether you witness, hear about or suspect bullying, you want to stop it. Here's what to do:

**Put it in writing.** If you don't have a clear anti-bullying policy that defines bullying with examples, explains how to confidentially report it and spells out punishment for violations, create it now.

**Train employees on civility –** yes, remind them how to be kind, considerate and conscientious of each other – and how to intervene when they witness bullying. This helps create a collective sense of responsibility to eliminate it, the Society for Human

Resource Management suggests.

**Address it** – as it happens, preferably. Give the facts of what's happened in the moment. (Avoid bringing up past incidents or using absolutes such as "always.") Appeal to the bully's values. Explain why it's a problem. Point out the negative feelings you or the victims might face. And ask the bully how he or she will change.

Say something like this:

*"Jim, you've yelled at Gina, unfairly criticizing her work. I know you care about the quality of the work we do here, but when you lash out, it undermines everyone's efforts. I'm upset about this situation, and I sense others are frustrated and possibly embarrassed. I need you to stop yelling at and belittling Gina and all of your co-workers. What will you do so it doesn't happen going forward?"*

**Investigate immediately.** If you don't witness the bullying and instead hear about it, look into it right away – no matter how minor it seems. Work with HR, document what you find and punish bullies under your policy guidelines.

**Support victims,** who often end up leaving or losing their jobs. Direct them to any support HR provides, keep them updated on progress and regularly follow up to be sure they're getting any help they need.

*Source: WBI, [tinyurl.com/WBI472](http://tinyurl.com/WBI472)*

## TECH CORNER

### Excel app cuts down on time keying in data: Try it!

The Excel Mobile app reduces time and energy spent keying in data from receipts, invoices and other documents.

How? By letting you insert data from a picture.

You take a picture of information like an itemized receipt or detailed purchase order. The app interprets the picture and turns it into a data table that can be placed in a spreadsheet.

### Whole new ballgame!

Here's how the process works:

1. Open a new document in the

Excel Mobile app.

2. Tap the icon that looks like a small spreadsheet with a camera in the bottom-right corner.

3. Once the camera opens, line up the data you want to import. A red outline will show where the software detects data.

4. Tap the circular capture button to take the picture. When you're satisfied with the picture, tap the checkmark.

5. A preview of the info will come up. If Excel has trouble with some of the data entries, you can edit them.

6. When everything looks right in your data table, tap "insert" to transfer the data into your spreadsheet.

## COMMUNICATION BRIEFS

### ■ Don't be a competitive communicator

Most managers are used to talking a lot, moving messages up and down the chain of command daily.

All that communicating can push some leaders toward being competitive conversationalists: They often want to top the other person's story or cut off people, telling them what to do about a problem.

Don't be that person! Instead, before you jump in with a story or solution, ask yourself:

- Is what I want to say going to add more value to this conversation?
- Does he or she want my advice or just to be heard?
- What question can I ask to improve the conversation?
- What outcome is he or she looking for, and how can I help reach it?

*Source: JohnSpence.com*

### ■ Need more creative ideas? 3 tactics to get them

Every company needs new, creative ideas to keep evolving. And there's no better source than employees who know the business best.

Here are three ways to stir the creative pot with employees:

- **Go on business field trips.** Give employees time (and money, if possible) to experience similar businesses to get ideas on how to change. Example: A financier gives employees cash to open accounts or try new services.
- **Change hats.** When one company needs out-of-the-box ideas, employees reach in a box and pick out hats or other tchotchkes with big corporate names – like Apple and Amazon. They wear the swag and try to think of solutions execs at those companies might try.
- **Reverse roles.** At a large accounting firm, millennials "reverse mentor" partners and directors to give them new perspective on culture, technology and ways of thinking and doing.

*Source: HBR, [tinyurl.com/ideas472](http://tinyurl.com/ideas472)*

## Real Problems, Real Solutions

Our subscribers come from a broad range of organizations, large and small. In this regular networking feature, three of them share their successes in improving workplace communication.

### 1 Compliments go a long way: Here's proof

We saw an uncomfortable trend in our company where employees were being called out for their mistakes and negative actions.

Workers told us over and over that they rarely felt praised or recognized for their positive efforts.

#### 'Too busy' excuse doesn't cut it

When we talked to supervisors about it, we realized it was a simple problem: They were busy.

It seemed urgent to point out mistakes, but too time-consuming to hand out compliments.

We wanted to help them focus on the positives rather than the negatives.

To do that, we started by setting an example. We recognized workers in front of their supervisors and peers whenever we got a chance.

Everyone could see the approach worked and started doing it.

The new practice not only made the employees feel more positive, it also reduced mistakes.

*(Jim Gilbert, Mental Health Program Specialist, Franklin-Fulton County MHMR, Chambersburg, PA)*

### 2 Preparation & practice put us on same page

You don't get better at anything unless you practice, practice, practice.

The same is true for emergency response plans – making sure you're prepared in case of a fire, power outage or worse.

#### Perfect opportunity to share info

We run emergency drills at least three or four times a year so we can see and hear if there are problems.

Peoples' health conditions change all the time. Someone might need help to get out quickly and if we don't know about it, we immediately find out while running drills.

Also: Employees come and go, and it's not unusual that you notice new faces who've actually been on board for months, not days!

We iron out any shortcomings in our plans with regular drills. You see who needs help, where access can be improved and so on.

*(Adapted from a presentation by Michael McCullough, President, County Action Restoration, at the Greater Philadelphia Building & Facility Management Show)*

### 3 Got silos? This will tear them down

We noticed that silos started forming when about eight people got involved – whether it was the company as a whole, a department or team.

The silos were pervasive and toxic. They limited work flow, positive feedback and overall performance.

To combat this, we slowed things down a little.

#### Created bigger interest

For instance, when it came to project teams, we pushed back forming the actual teams for several weeks.

Instead, we pulled everyone who might be involved into the initial planning to collaborate, learn and start building a foundation for success.

Then, when we had a better sight of how the project would pan out, we assigned the teams.

This helps establish a communal interest in the project, so employees are constantly engaged in and interacting over it, and silos can't form.

*(Giles Ochs, Co-Founder, Project Bio, shared this success on SmartBrief's Young Entrepreneur Council)*



### YOUR LEGAL COACH

#### How can we keep our job ads inclusive?

**Question:** A company in our building just got in trouble for its job ads. Apparently, they used some language that wasn't inclusive enough. We don't want to make that mistake. What should we do?

**Answer:** You want to avoid any language that could discourage someone from applying for the job because of a protected class, says Michael Blum, an employment law attorney at Foster Swift Collins & Smith.

That includes suggesting a preference for a certain age, race, ability or gender.

#### What to avoid

Some things to avoid: "young and energetic," "new college grads" or "able-bodied workers."

Those are antiquated terms and don't belong in job ads or job descriptions, Blum says.

**Source:** [tinyurl.com/hiring472](http://tinyurl.com/hiring472)

### LIGHTER SIDE

#### Firing gone wrong: Here's why you double-check

It's always a good idea to clarify your assignment before you do it.

That's something this manager should've done.

The company owner asked the new HR manager to let an under-performing employee go. The HR manager called the employee into her office, fired her and filled out the necessary paperwork.

A few hours later, the owner stepped in and asked how the firing went.

"Just fine," the HR manager said.

"Then why is the employee still here performing her job?" the owner asked.

The HR manager fired the wrong person!

**Source:** [tinyurl.com/fire472](http://tinyurl.com/fire472)

## COMMUNICATION NEWS

## Business writing that's not boring: 5 keys

No one wants to bore readers when they write. But business writing can be so boring!

It doesn't have to be, though. In fact, it shouldn't be. Considering more than 40% of people have basic literacy skills, you want to write about business with some excitement.

### Be conversational

Here are five keys to writing about business without being a bore:

- **Write like you talk.** Read what you write out loud to make sure it sounds like a conversation, not a corporate memo.

### Folks having trouble meeting deadlines? Try this approach

When employees have problems meeting your deadlines – particularly members of other departments or teams – try this:

Ask them to set their own time limits.

### If you can live with it, so can workers

Ask the worker when he or she thinks a task can be completed.

The key is making sure you get a specific answer, not something vague like, "I'll get it done soon."

Before agreeing on a deadline, double-check

- **Cut complexity.** Skip phrases and words you wouldn't use in a conversation. Biggies: *utilize, impact* and *execute*.
- **Make it glanceable.** People are more likely to read bullet-pointed information with lots of subheads and diagrams – especially since they often read on small devices.
- **Get to the point.** Tell people what they need to know and what you want them to do immediately. Skip the wind up.
- **Know your reader.** Write to the audience and what they need to get from the message. Then write so they get it.

Source: [tinyurl.com/writing472](http://tinyurl.com/writing472)

that the worker thinks it's reasonable by clarifying the deadline:

"Are you sure you'll be able to finish this by Tuesday?"

This gives the employee the chance to go back, check his work schedule and make sure there aren't other matters preventing it from happening.

Caveat: If you think the worker's procrastinating, let him know this job is a priority over other projects. You may need to take a closer look at his workload, too.

## Sharpen Your Judgment – The Decision

(continued from Page 1)

Yes, the employee won.

The American Arbitration Association awarded Susan nearly \$400,000 in back pay as a result of the company unlawfully failing to pay her at the same level as her male peers.

While working for the company, Susan performed the same job as her male predecessors – yet she earned roughly half as much in salary and bonuses.

The company argued it pays its employees based on merit, seniority and experience. But the court ruled the evaluations done by Susan's supervisor were too subjective.

The company also used the poor economy as an excuse for paying Susan less, but testimony

showed other employees received large bonuses during the recession.

### Employees will talk about pay!

This case illustrates a truth all managers know: You can't keep wages a secret. Many employees talk about their pay. And if they believe the policy isn't fair, they'll resent it.

It's true people often negotiate different compensation packages when they're hired. But wildly different salaries often lead to high turnover – or worse, lawsuits.

(Based on *Wilson v. Citicorp Financial*. Dramatized for effect.)

### Quotes

It is often easier to make progress on mega-ambitious dreams ... since no one else is crazy enough to do it, you have little competition.

– Larry Page

Don't wait your turn. Bet on yourself and have the confidence to stand up and say, 'My time is now.'

– Robert F. Smith

You never go wrong when you take the high road – it's less crowded up there.

– Gayle King

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