

Toxic Employees: A Thorn in the Flesh at Work Place

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“People are hired for their talents and fired for their behaviour. Organizations are made up of people; the place that provide work satisfaction and all the real opportunities for the employees’ future growth. Taken in this context; the Organizational behaviour looks at how workers influence each other by their interpersonal and soft skills. Every organization has three types of people viz the leaders who strive to maintain harmony and bring everyone together as a team, second the toxic people who discourage others, play politics and mislead their co-workers for selfish purpose and the remaining are those who go with the tide. There is no doubt that the great employees are enthusiastic about their jobs, they don’t think twice to go the extra mile, and are dedicated team players. Rather on the other hand, the toxic (brilliant too) employee steps on toes, treats critics rudely, violates team and individual trust, bypasses the chain of command, alienates team members, and irks everyone. Later on, these Toxic employees’ become one of the most common reasons for the corporate-culture downfalls. Having a toxic employee on a team is more menacing than just having an imperfect employee. Self-centred behaviour can lead to an excessive focus on self-gratification at work, resulted in the violation of others’ rights, bullying, and exploitation. This behaviour by a toxic employee affects the morale and work efficiency of the entire team. Christine Porath, in Mastering Civility: A Manifesto for the Workplace says these employees usually display a pattern of de-energizing, frustrating, or putting down teammates. Generally speaking, colleagues who do not feel the need to self-censor their behaviour, overly demanding bosses, and an over focus on self advancement contribute to toxicity at work. Much like a contagious virus, negativity and ill will can spread throughout an organization, creating an unpleasant working environment, lowering morale, and ultimately, affecting business productivity and results. In Self Esteem at Work, Branden explained the decline in morale that results from unwarranted probing: “When people don’t feel safe they become defensive, fearful, timid, and resentful, none of which produces peak performance.”

The paper aims to explore the organizational toxicity on various levels such as toxic leader, toxic manager, toxic culture, toxic behaviours (Aggressiveness, Humiliating others, Narcissism, Lack of credibility Disorganization & Passivity) & toxic organization and its upshot outcomes in the workplace.

Keywords: *Organizational behaviour, Organizational toxicity, Toxin behaviour.*

There is no doubt that the great employees are enthusiastic about their jobs, they don't think twice to go the extra mile, and are dedicated team players. Rather on the other hand, the toxic (brilliant too) employee steps on toes, treats critics rudely, violates team and individual trust, bypasses the chain of command, alienates team members, and irks everyone. Later on, these Toxic employees' become one of the most common reasons for the corporate-culture downfalls. Having a toxic employee on a team is more menacing than just having an imperfect employee. Self-centred behaviour can lead to an excessive focus on self-gratification at work, resulted in the violation of others' rights, bullying, and exploitation. This behaviour by a toxic employee affects the morale and work efficiency of the entire team. A toxic employee is like having a low-grade infection. You can live with it for a while but, if not properly treated, it can develop into a full-blown infection - making you, and your business, suffer. Ultimately, you may have to fire the employee, but what I've suggested may offer some relief, and could even turn things around. Christine Porath, in *Mastering Civility: A Manifesto for the Workplace* says these employees usually display a pattern of de-energizing, frustrating, or putting down teammates. Generally speaking, colleagues who do not feel the need to self-censor their behaviour, overly demanding bosses, and an over focus on self advancement contribute to toxicity at work. Much like a contagious virus, negativity and ill will can spread throughout an organization, creating an unpleasant working environment, lowering morale, and ultimately, affecting business productivity and results.

Toxic employees have a fairly negligible effect on the performance of their co-workers, which suggests that they have a stronger influence on stress and burnout than on day-to-day task completion. Hence the essentials would be to try as well as to determine the cause of the toxicity. When did it start? Has it always been this way? What do you know about this person's health, for example, that could be causing his negative behaviour? Is it just in certain situations and with certain people? Is it worse on Mondays than it is on Fridays? What prejudices and biases do you have that may be influencing things? In other words, what

motivational forces are at play - from the toxic employee, from you, and from others? Taking time to look at the big picture is essential to understanding and dealing with the problem.

It is undoubtedly true if it is defined toxic behaviour as involuntary termination due to policy violations such as workplace violence, drug or alcohol abuse, sexual harassment, falsification of documents, and fraud. In other words, we defined toxic behaviour to be the most egregious examples of employee misconduct and did not consider the impacts of the behaviours, which are likely to be far more prevalent. Across the entire sample, we found that about 3 to 5% of all employees met the criteria for being terminated as a toxic employee. In their sociological experiment of 2007, Will Felps, a doctoral student at the University of Washington Business School and Terence Mitchell, a professor of management and organisation in the Business School and University of Washington psychology professor, explored the impact of bad apples on other team members. They found that a single toxic team member could become the catalyst for downward spirals in organisations. Groups that had the bad apple would typically perform 30-40% worse than other groups even though the group was made up of highly talented, smart, and very likeable individuals

But there is hope, and it begins by first recognizing the characteristics of these employees, which can be done by using behavioural interviewing techniques, will help to screen out toxic candidates in hiring process. The first step in dealing with a toxic workplace is learning to identify what is causing it —and then how it's affecting your team, your culture, and your bottom line.

This behavioural interviewing technique can be done by asking certain questions about their biggest success as their personal achievements, skills and team efforts. Whatever their success, a great candidate will show that they are interested in doing their best work, and the impact it has on their employer, team, and workplace as a whole. Secondly it may be asking about how they handle the difficult situation and how much they have a potentiality to cope with difficult situations and even how they perform under pressure. It is important to keep a watch on them at the time of answering the question about how many red flags, they blame others. The third technique would be asking them about their weakness because it is important to explore weaknesses to find out whether the candidate has a genuine interest in growing their skills and learning new things. A potentially toxic employee typically thinks they know it all and won't be interested in learning new skills. In this series the next technique can be asking them what they would change about their current/ previous role. As

it is perfectly normal for candidates to dislike parts of their current role, but they should be able to explain the issues without complaining or blaming any particular person. They need to be able to discuss changes they would make and focus on the positive outcomes of those changes not the negative issues.

Employee morale, productivity and customer service levels are at their highest when employees work effectively as a team and practice basic tenets of civility and respect for each other. Behavior that is not consistent with basic collegial and professional expectations can result in significant negative consequences to the organization and its people and can increase an organization's potential legal liability. It is very easy to identify the employees who possess toxic Behaviour. For this you have to be able to spot a problem employee and understand what makes them toxic. For example- negative attitude, quick to anger, don't want to work, Unwillingness to take responsibility, Gossip, Sabotage and insubordination and many more. These toxic employees go to the next level, trying to build themselves up by deliberately making their co-workers, and even the company, look bad. They are usually clock watchers, Unprofessional and inappropriate communications. Workers who use the company email system to send snarky messages to forward off-color/inappropriate jokes, or workers who engage in loud phone calls that include personal details can be a huge distraction to productive employees, or worse - a harassment claim in the making. In a 2016 survey conducted by Weber Shandwick, Civility in America VII: The State of Civility, 30% of managers indicated that they had fired or threatened to fire someone due to incivility and nearly 25% of employees said they had quit a job due to an uncivil workplace. Additionally, 87% of workers indicated that workplace incivility has an impact on work performance, including in the following ways:

- 55% of respondents said their morale suffered.
- 45% expressed a desire to quit.
- 38% felt anger toward co-workers or the employer.
- 36% noticed a reduction in the quality of their work.
- 33% discouraged others from working at the company.
- 32% experienced a negative effect on their personal time.
- 26% felt less creative.
- 23% called in sick.

Managing a toxic person can eat up your time, energy, and productivity. Sometimes people are exhibiting toxic behaviours because of what's happening in their home life and they don't realize that they are reacting to that outside stress in a disruptive or disrespectful way at work. One of the main reasons employees engage in disruptive behaviours is because they don't feel they are being heard. When unacceptable behaviors appear, good managers will start to pay close attention to what is going on and not turn away from problems they'd rather ignore. Make note of specific behaviours to address, including when they were observed and who was present. Take time to collect information and understand the issue as fully as possible. Be sure to solicit the problematic employee's point of view; by doing so, managers often learn of something that is blocking the employee's progress and causing them stress, which can be addressed and resolved. Just being heard can also be a factor in de-escalating negative behaviours before they get out of control.

There are various tips for managing toxic employees like - Separate the Employee from their Personality, the employee could be having professional or personal issues that you know nothing about, so try to remember that their difficult demeanour might have very little to do with you personally, Remember to Listen, Mirror the Conversation, Avoid a Stalemate, Have an Open Door Policy. Leaders ultimately bear the responsibility of establishing an environment free from toxic behaviours. Although terminating an employment relationship is never a desired outcome, it may be necessary. Documenting behaviour and incidents, counselling on the need to change behaviour, and eventually firing the employee may be necessary to eliminate the toxic build up. When leaders take action and let their employees know these behaviours will not be tolerated, the change to a positive environment can be drastic. On the other hand, if the leadership of the organization is the root cause, employees must be bold enough to address and seek recourse through HR and talent managers.

It is important to note that there are some deviant behaviours that are positive and constructive. However, it is the destructive deviant behaviours that will negatively affect the organization's performance and the work environment. More companies are now including civility training for all employees, which can include business etiquette, cultural sensitivity and diversity awareness components. Training should not only define civility and list the employer's expectations, it should teach what civility looks like and describe or act out scenarios ripe for incivility, giving participants the chance to practice how to maintain composure instead of acting out. The only way to begin prohibiting toxins from climbing the ladder in the organization

would be to recognize and identify who and what the toxins are and where they are placed. Once the toxins are recognized, actions need to be taken to either eliminate them or attempt to modify their behaviour and impact. This is where the continuation of research is needed to determine how the relationships between the employee's attitudes, perceptions, and personality interact. Difficult employees have a real impact on the productivity and morale of the entire group. Over time, a negative work environment will diminish performance and increase turnover. While it is important to learn how to effectively manage challenging employees, you must also prevent difficult people from infiltrating your workplace in the future. Your hiring process should include a means for assessing personality to ensure a strong fit. After all, the most skilled person in the world will not have a positive impact on the team if he undermines group productivity.

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