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**BOSSONOMICS
DESTRUCTIVE LEADERSHIP**

**IF YOU RATED YOURSELF AND THE
MANAGEMENT COLLEAGUES YOU
WORK WITH WHAT WOULD BE
YOUR HONEST ASSESSMENT?**

“STAR”, “OKAY”, “JERK”, “USELESS”... or worse names?

What are you called at the dinner table of your employees? How many of your employees say “I hate my job and my boss”? How hard is the door slammed when your employee arrives home? Were the children screamed at? How much crying goes on at home because of you and your colleagues? How much do you contribute to the insomnia of your staff? How much absenteeism is related to your workplace’s toxic environment?

INTRODUCTION

The sentiments above use shocking words that make some people cringe. Some readers are saying to themselves “No, that’s not happening with my staff.” Others are getting defensive that this author would suggest OR leaders are anything but perfect... or at least doing their best in a difficult environment.” Others will say “That couldn’t happen in nursing”. Those rejecting the idea are wrong – for the sake of your employees, please read on!

**LE LEADERSHIP
DESTRUCTEUR**

**SI VOUS PRENIEZ LE TEMPS
D’EVALUER HONNETEMENT LA
PERSONNALITE DE PATRON DE
VOUS-MEME ET DE VOS COLLEGUES
GESTIONNAIRES, QUELLE SERAIT
VOTRE CONCLUSION?**

« STAR », « SATISFAISANT », « LOIN DE
PARFAIT », « INUTILE » ou encore pire?

À la table de souper, qu’est-ce que vos employés
disent de vous? Combien de vos employés disent
qu’ils haïssent leur emploi et leur patron aussi?

La porte d’entrée claque-t-elle bien trop fort
quand ils rentrent après le travail? Vos employés
crient-ils après leurs enfants de frustration?
Combien de larmes sont le résultat d’actions de
vous et de vos collègues? Combien d’heures de
sommeil perdues? L’absentéisme est-il le résultat
d’un environnement de travail toxique?

PEARLS OF WISDOM (CONT.)

It's true, "bossonomics" is not a word. But for the purpose of this article it seemed necessary to coin a new phrase. Bossosnomics may be defined as reflection of the impact had by, and outcomes created by, the person who is providing direction, establishing authority and control over employees.

The modern manager, director, or supervisor may want to be seen, and referred to, as the "leader". But in truth, the staff will always see that person as "the boss" The boss may be referred to in kindly manner or, at the other end of the spectrum, in very derogatory terms. So, is being the boss a bad thing? That all depends what category of bossonomics you fall into. Using the four choices at the introduction of the article, where would you place yourself? What about the other leadership personnel you are responsible for? This is not an exact science, just based on years and years of hearing employees voice the same type of opinions.

One would wonder how many of those "destructive leaders" believe they can only control if they are viewed as "tough and in control." Distancing themselves from employees with their feelings, demands and needs may be a coping mechanism. Low self esteem, insecurity, incompetence and lack of direction may also add to the negative behavior. There may also be a belief that not being liked by the employees is a sign of a good leader.

Bossonomics requires that you really look in the mirror for a critical review and to determine what your staff are really saying and how you are viewed. You also need to take a look at the other management team members – bad managers reflect on the boss and other colleagues. It does not end there – what about the staff? If the boss has blinders on to staff behaviour it can create a toxic environment that may be driving the keen, young staff – the staff of the future – away. A boss who is seen to do nothing about bad behaviour will not have the respect of the staff.

The challenge is for every leader to know him or herself, know their own management style, and to recognize its impact on everyone



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What Type of Boss Are You?

including on the boss' personal reputation. It is the staff that make the productive world go round – not the bosses. The bosses, however, have the potential to destroy work environments, and employees, for a very long time. The characteristics and impact of the destructive boss are being widely discussed in books, newspapers, blogs, web sites and, most importantly, in the kitchens, living rooms and bedrooms of the employees. Books with such a title as "Monster Manager" the website www.badbossology.com provide an introduction to the magnitude of the problem. Why is there such a large market for authors of books about the phenomenon of "bad bosses"? "Bad boss" activity unfortunately must be prevalent or no one would be reading about it – it is time to wake up, recognize and take action.

DESTRUCTIVE CHARACTERISTICS

Beverly Kaye and Sharon Jordan-Evans describe many of the characteristics in "Are You The Jerk at Work" (www.fastcompany.com)? Some of the terms describing the "jerk" or the destructive boss' behaviours include rude behaviour, yelling at staff, telling lies and half-truths, humiliation, intimidation, sarcasm, belittling staff in front of colleagues, swearing, and inappropriate humor. Arrogance, negative feedback, withholding recognition, slamming doors, and losing their temper at meetings all create poor moral. Some bosses will withhold information, micromanage, take credit for work done by others, frequently

Continued on Page 36

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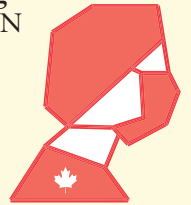
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PEARLS OF WISDOM (CONT.)

remind everyone who is the boss and exude an “I am above it all” attitude. Bullying, racism, and sexism add frost to the toxic waters. Equally disturbing negative adjectives that are frequently added to the word boss include: evil, psycho, pig, monster, idiot and jerk. Do you see any of these characteristics, even periodically, in yourself, or in other managers, physicians and staff? If you are saying “no” you have your head in the sand. Even showing only one or two of the above behaviours on a periodic basis can be enough to ruin a boss’ reputation. Leaders often have no idea of the impact of actions that the leader views as trivial. But the staff grapevine is long, sour, and a little bit rotten – word will travel and memories are long. By being honest about his or her behaviour a leader can do something about it!

IMPACT OF DESTRUCTIVE LEADERS

The staff are the critical “production” part of an organization. In toxic, unhappy, or abusive work environments productivity will suffer. Disgruntled, non-valued personnel will take back some control by reducing productivity – or just plain QUITTING! A large portion of our current staffing shortage, and lack of retention, is the result of poor work environments, bad bosses, and colleagues that behave in a similar manner.

Conversations with hundreds of nurses over the years confirm that they place a high value on educational opportunities and career development. Disrespecting the priority, or denying attention to the educational component, is one of the most common characteristics of a destructive leader. Combining this disrespect or denial with feeble excuses does not fly – staff don’t buy it and believe that if there was respect, and a will, there would be a way! Disinterest in, and disregard for, professional opportunities, personal values, and daily work needs can be very demoralizing.

It is important to believe that the destructive person does not get out of bed in the morning with a “whose life can I ruin today” attitude. Does it just happen or has something pushed this person’s buttons and resulted in a loss of integrity, trust and compassion? I doubt many

destructive leaders have any idea of how they behave or of the impact of their behaviour. If they truly are vindictive, mean, power mongers then there is no way to change them – an “exit strategy” is the only way to maintain the integrity of the workplace in protecting and retaining the employees. Strong senior leaders and human resources personnel should carry out policies, toward this end, before too much collateral damage is done.

CONSIDERATIONS IN CHANGING DESTRUCTIVE ACTIVITIES

I have long since learned that you likely cannot change an individual’s basic personality, mode of operation, leadership style, or attitudes. Having an awareness, however, of unacceptable action and the impact on the staff and putting in place a specific plan of action, with consistent follow up, may change the outcome. Recommendations for managing toxic situations include:

Live by your motto - Print your less than 5 word motto on a small card – have it in front of your face as a frequent reminder. Every day ask yourself “am I living up to it. Sample mottos could be “a positive image”, “smile and listen”, “professional interest”, “lower my voice”, “look in their eyes”, “don’t presume-investigate”. Take five minutes to reflect three or four times a day and ask yourself “what just happened?”.

Know your staff - It is important to have good communication links and to LISTEN, and pay attention to, what they are saying through words and actions. Do not be an “absentee landlord”. Recognize your staff as people with important lives and be aware of how they describe their job to others. What is the morale in the work place? Take ownership – usually the staff will tell you, as long as they are not incriminated – if not, that is a message for you. Request an unbiased human resource expert find out for you, pay attention and start changing the destructive factors for your employees. Remember the employees are the ones that do the work for you and in spite of you.

Continued on Page 38

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PEARLS OF WISDOM (CONT.)

Know your personal reputation - what does your conversation with the mirror tell you? What do you see when you step back and evaluate yourself as the staff see you? Read between the lines of what people are telling you. Carefully reflect on how the staff react to your words, presence and direction. No news is not necessarily good news – if staff aren't talking to you there could be a problem.

Face, and accept, the facts - Fear, denial, and avoidance create an environment where the employees can be destroyed. The toxicity only increases for those who stay, while many excellent, and often young, staff may suffer long-term impact... and may quit, just as you have them fully trained! Don't stick your head in the sand – leaders who do not deal effectively with a “bad boss” also lose their own credibility.

Leadership crisis - Accept the fact that there is a leadership crisis both in quality and quantity. Don't be fooled by the assumption that you are desperate – often a bad manager is worse than no manager at all. Recruitment of the right people, rather than just filling a position in haste, is critical. Many employers do not check references that could have provided warnings. Are you asking the right questions during interviews? Are the candidate's responses giving you the information you need and not just what the candidate thinks you want to hear?

Demonstrate consistent role model behaviours - Good leaders attract more good leaders. Bad leaders, however, drive away good leaders.



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A good leader means a happy and productive team

Good leaders are more likely to choose to work in a positive, supportive, environment where initiative can thrive and people are happy.

Read the “bad boss”, “jerk boss” literature, web sites, and blogs to gain insight into what to look for and how staff respond to it. Information will help create insight and lead to action.

Development Training - attend training sessions yourself and make sure problem leaders attend. Have a follow up plan in place to determine what they have learned, how they will incorporate it, and how they will report ongoing progress.

Performance Management - Be alert and document unacceptable interactions, with precise words, tone and responses. Coach leaders and monitor their progress. Establish a code of conduct with the parameters by which to measure behaviour. Use highly skilled human resource consultants to assist with complex issues. Outside consultants may be useful. If you are unable to deal with the issues and effect change then be prepared to “adjust the employment status” – whether it is your own or that of someone else. Do not leave your staff hostage to bad bosses.

CONCLUSION

Be alert to the reputation, conduct, and communication patterns of those you supervise as well as those you report to. Do not excuse unacceptable behaviour with statements like “that is just the work culture”. Leaders who do not deal with destructive staff will lose their credibility and reputation.

Know what is being said about you in the locker room. Know what your reputation really is. The truth may hurt, but consider if you, or some other supervisor, are the reason you are short of staff. Behave in a manner that has everyone saying “I love my job”. Be one of those “magnet departments” where there is a waiting list to join. Create a three to five work personal motto and remind yourself at all times what it is. Your obligation is pursuit of professional excellence – nothing less will do! 🍁



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