



Dobson Associates

Human Performance Consultants

Employee Mistreatment Costs Businesses Hundreds of Millions Annually in the United States

Workers faced with an abusive boss hardly find any humor in their jobs. The economic impact over the past four to five years has become a focal point of interest among psychologists and management researchers.

Abusive behaviors are everything from the “silent treatment” to “aggressive eye contact” to “name-calling” and even to “threats of job loss.”

Researchers believe that the rapidly changing work world and competitiveness causing increased stress, is contributing to the breeding of abusive behaviors in bosses.

The higher you go in an organization the greater the competition becomes. The aggression that develops from this stress many times is passed on to the bosses subordinates.

An increasing number of younger managers in the workplace may be the contributing factor, say some researchers.

As people age they become better able to handle stress or mistreatment without passing it down. (It is well-known that younger people tend to act out in a way that can be construed as aggressive.)

Targets of abuse are usually non-confrontational and they wait too long to complain. They hope that the abuse will blow over.

A survey of hostile workplaces found that 80% of victims reported that they were unable to be productive because of anxiety, loss of concentration, and sleeplessness.

This leads to a high rate of absenteeism, and other actions such as employees withholding positive actions that could help the company.

Abused workers will even the score through many different types of subversive actions that will undermine the company. These tactics may never be tied directly to any one particular employee.

Some actions may be “bad-mouthing” the company in public gatherings or withholding helpful activity from a coworker.

In either case the company gets a reputation in the community that may cause a loss of business.

This loss of trust and faith may take years for a company to overcome.

A Study of Abusive Behaviors in the Workplace:

- 50% men and 50% women bosses are abusive
- Women bosses target other women 80% of the time
- Coworkers know 96% of time when abuse is occurring to other employees
- 67% of victims had no prior history of being abused
- 41% of abused people are diagnosed with depression
- 31% of women who are abused experience post-traumatic stress disorder
- Abusive bosses rarely suffer any consequences due to the fact that they are supported by another bad boss
- Only 11% of coworkers side with the abusive boss

Article from News Journal Monday Jan 13, 2003 by Maureen Milford

Franklin E. Dobson, Jr., Dobson Associates
(302) 479-5342 www.dobsonassociates.com
© Dobson Associates