

Profit, Productivity & Peace – The Business Case for Eliminating Workplace Bullying

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Introduction

Bullying can be as harmful to business profits, productivity and workplace harmony as it is in schools and other areas of society. If asked, most business leaders most likely know that workplace bullying causes the well serious health impacts for targets. They would probably also agree that they feel a moral and ethical obligation to respond. However, despite studies, much publicity and even expanding illegalization, the majority of organizations throughout the world remain ineffective or unmotivated to proactively prevent or directly confront workplace bullying. Sadly, the rates of workplace bullying are increasingly dramatically.

Perhaps the key to unlocking organizational response is to focus on the broader business impacts that could harm the bottom line, program/project success, and wreak havoc within their employee ranks. Let's forget for a moment about the moral, emotional and ethical reasons why organizations should eliminate workplace bullying. Instead, let's focus our arguments on profits, financial incentives, and ROI. Bluntly put, ending bullying is just plain good for business.

The statistics are clear and irrefutable – workplace bullying is costing businesses billions of dollars annually. For every short-term result that a bully might create (i.e. a project completed on time and budget, or a previously struggling unit whipped back into shape), there is a long list of longer-term negative business impacts that far outweigh any temporary benefits. To quote Patricia Barnes, a workplace bullying author, judge and attorney, workplace bullying is likely the *“single most preventable and needless expense on a company's register.”*

I maintain that if we focus our anti-bullying message to align with the motivators of business leaders, we may receive more positive engagement from them. By focusing on the things that motivate business leaders to listen and using a “what's in it for you” strategy, I believe we can become change leaders to move our organizations to an effective and meaningful zero-tolerance policy for workplace bullying.

Exhibit 1 – It's Time for Business to Do the Right Thing



Before we begin a conversation with our organizations highlighting why bullying is bad for business, we must first ensure we have the baseline information to be credible and persuasive with our organizational leaders, corporate executives and Boards of Directors. Attacking the problem like project managers, we need to have a strong, proof-based business case that includes a costs/benefits analysis and convincing needs analysis. We should have a clear understanding of what bullying is (and isn't), proof it is a serious and growing problem, irrefutable information about the negative financial impacts caused by bullying and a Return on Investment that highlights the opportunity cost of failing to act and solidly demonstrates that taking action pays economic dividends to the organization.

Workplace Bullying: A Definition

First, we must clearly articulate and define workplace bullying. For the sake of clarity, references to "bullying" in this paper refer to workplace bullying. It is a focused, systematic campaign of interpersonal destruction. The actions are repeated, disrespectful, and deliberate and they are always perpetrated for the bully's benefit. It has nothing to do with work itself. Yet the bully's impact can wreak havoc and result in serious economic and productivity diminishment.

Workplace Bullying is mistreatment of one or more persons (the targets) by one or more perpetrators. The Workplace Bullying and Trauma Institute (WBI) defines workplace bullying as "*repeated, health-harming mistreatment, verbal abuse, or conduct which is threatening, humiliating, intimidating, or sabotage that interferes with work, or some combination of the three*". The WBI is an excellent resource for anyone wishing to learn more about workplace bullying (<http://www.workplacebullying.org/recommended-books/>).

Workplace bullying includes behaviors that can be categorized into three types, as outlined below (the list of examples is not exhaustive).

Aggressive Communication

- Insulting or making offensive remarks
- Shouting, yelling, angry outbursts
- Going around co-workers in order to avoid communicating with them
- Harsh finger pointing, invasion of personal space, shoving, blocking the way
- Sending angry emails or other e-communication

Manipulation of Work

- Removing tasks imperative to job responsibilities
- Giving unmanageable workloads & impossible deadlines
- Arbitrarily changing tasks
- Using employee evaluations to document supposed poor work quality and without setting goals or providing the tools needed to improve
- Withholding pertinent information needed to do one's job effectively
- Excessive micromanagement
- Failing to give credit, or stealing credit for others' work
- Preventing access to opportunities like promotions or raises

Sabotaging Work

- Humiliating or ridiculing, excessive teasing
- Spreading rumors or gossip
- Ignoring peers when they walk by
- Playing harsh practical jokes
- Taunting with the use of social media
- Hinting that someone should quit, nobody likes them

Work Interactions that don't qualify as Bullying

As important to articulating a clear definition of bullying, we must also understand that many day-to-day workplace differences of opinion, difficult team dynamics and competition are both normal and healthy. Not every unpleasant or challenging conflict with people at work or in a project is bullying – on the contrary. Conflict is a normal part of life and conflict and competitive behaviors in the workplace are normal. So, it's important to contrast normal work behavior and interaction from bullying.

Here are some helpful examples of reasonable and regular conflicts that take place while working on projects that wouldn't qualify as bullying unless they also involved some of the behaviors noted in the definition of 'bullying':

- Expressing differences of opinion;
- Offering constructive feedback, guidance, or advice about work-related behavior;
- Reasonable action taken by an employer or supervisor relating to the management and direction of workers (i.e., managing performance, taking reasonable disciplinary actions, assigning work);
- Unpopular, yet defensible decisions related to project management (i.e., resource allocation, solving budget problems, project scale reduction, scheduling decisions which increase workload, etc.); and
- Project cancellation or delay.

The key is to approach each situation with a reasonable, objective perspective in order to properly assess if there is bullying involved. Seek the advice from trusted colleagues or human resources specialists (but best not to ask those within your organization for help until you've received credible advice). Ask others PMPs who are outside of your workplace to provide their insight. Use the PMI Ethics tools provided on the website and the five-step Ethics Decision-Making Framework to assist in evaluating the situation (see References for links).

Workplace Bullying is Increasing

Executives may want to see proof that bullying is a growing problem and that we aren't reacting emotionally or "crying wolf". According to a 2013 Harvard Business Review article, over the last few decades, the number of people who've admitted to being the target of workplace bullying has increased drastically. How many people are bullied at work? Recent research indicates that 35% of the workforce is bullied (CareerBuilder.com. 2012). Other international research has found that 53% (Rayners, 1997), and even up to 75% (Einarsen &

Raknes, 1997), of the workforce is bullied. The percentage of people bullied will vary based on country, industry, gender, organizational culture, and many other factors.

These statistics and the harm bullies cause have direct financial impacts on organizations and, if there is a bully operating within, the impact on everything from the bottom line, organizational reputation, and productivity to staff and projects can be far more serious than executives may appreciate at first blush. To use a timely example – an August 16, 2015 New York Times article that made allegations of Amazon having a Darwinian workplace culture rife with examples of bullying reverberated throughout the world, costing the company billions in share value devaluation.

What Motivates Project Bullies?

Bullying is about power & control. This aligns with the research – since bosses hold the power, it makes sense that a lot of bullies are bosses. According to Pinsky (p. 69) *“bullying behaviour was purposely employed in militaristic, male-dominated command and control workplace cultures and formed the foundational cultural model of many workplaces up until quite recently. Bullying is like bacteria. It needs the right environment in which to thrive. In business, that environment is a disrespectful workplace culture.”*

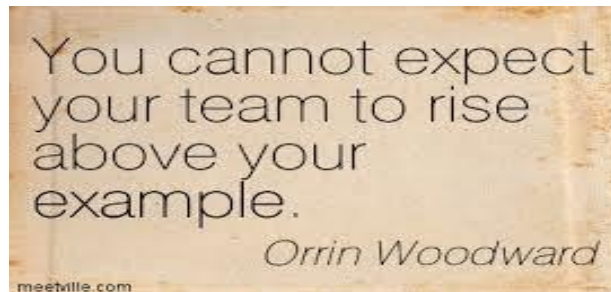
From this cultural model comes workplace attitudes that promote win/lose, competitiveness and *“the desire to dominate.”* (Pinsky p. 69). Organizations that embrace such a traditional power-based culture are ideal environments for bullies. They usually get rewarded for getting results and the methods they use to achieve success are ignored. *“Typically, bullies are very clever and manipulative. The face they present to their own bosses is charming, solicit and agreeable’. Their managers usually view them as “efficient, able to deal with tough issues and situations, someone who gets results.”* (Pinsky p. 78)

Bullies are motivated by deep-rooted insecurity, envy and jealousy. They generally target those they perceive as a threat. Again, this aligns perfectly with the characteristics of most targets who actually are the most competent and well-liked project team members. One can see how a bully could easily perceived such competence as a threat.

Following a militaristic command methodology, bullies generally approach their targets and colleagues using fear, intimidation, and threats. They are malicious, arrogant, sneaky and underhanded. They commonly treat people like children. They encourage conflict and above all, they create a work environment rife with stress and fear. In short, they are workplace terrorists.

The Costs of Workplace Bullying

Exhibit 2 – Reality Check for Organizations



There is a wide range of direct negative and financial impacts that bullying has on the bottom line. Our challenge is pushing organizations to revise their focus on short-term results (which bullies are experts at achieving) to take a longer-term and deeper view approach. Bullies are too expensive to keep, but convincing executives, the bully's best friends and supporters, is difficult. If we can open the minds of executives to consider the damage that is being done to get those short-term results, we might get somewhere.

Getting the ear of senior management is never easy but one thing helps – cold, clear facts that objectify the problem and highlight the opportunity cost of not resolving it. In order to convince the sceptics, it may help to have some reliable data to shore up the argument that bullying is bad for business.

In a 2014 Guardian article on the problems created by workplace bullying, writer Ian Erickson, references an article on Stuff.com, in which New Zealander, Shane Cowishlaw, writes that workplace bullying costs his country “hundreds of millions” of dollars. Australia reports losses in the billions. Not surprisingly for companies in the much larger United States, workplace bullying-related costs are estimated to be over \$200 billion. According to *New Zealand News*, workplace bullying affects about one in five employees.

Mr. Erickson also discusses how workplace bullying harms profits. He notes that: “*The Workplace Bullying Institute describes workplace bullying in part, as behaviour that prevents work from being finished. Losses are caused by staff members struggling to cope at work, high rates of absenteeism and talented employees leaving in favour of a more harmonious place of employment*”.

Many business leaders would likely say that bullying is wrong, but not all recognize that it has tangible and significant costs and where those costs and impacts are created. In order to respond to a reluctant senior manager, the writer believes that it helps to have clear information about each cost impact so that we can tailor-make our approach to focus on the areas with which the executive in question is most concerned. Putting ourselves in the world of the executives and modelling the conversation on topics or statistics that resonate for them and keep them up at night might be effective.

Approaching this process using a pyramid model, we begin with the impacts and costs that are likely at the bottom of many senior executives’ list of concerns and work up to those that

create anxiety for any organizational leader. Each one may be helpful depending on the bullying situation your organization is trying to manage.

Targets:

Targets of bullying often punish their offenders and the organization, although most hide or bury their feelings and don't necessarily think of their actions as revenge. Through a WBI poll of 800 managers and employees in 17 industries, we learned just how people's reactions play out. *"Among workers who've been on the receiving end of bullying:*

- 48% intentionally decreased their work effort.*
- 47% intentionally decreased the time spent at work.*
- 38% intentionally decreased the quality of their work.*
- 63% lost work time avoiding the offender.*
- 78% said that their commitment to the organization declined.*
- 12% said that they left their job because of the uncivil treatment.*
- 25% admitted to taking their frustration out on customers".*

Further, targets frequently become ill and take extended absences from work. Given the target is usually one of the top performers, this causes ripples throughout a project, unit and team. It also has a direct cost impact for the organization. This information alone should send a chill up any senior manager's spine. Anything that can harm productivity and program success is worth looking at more closely.

Team members/ Colleagues:

Experiments and other reports offer additional insights about the effects of bullying on those around the target. Here are some examples of what can happen.

Project team and individual creativity suffers. In an experiment that the WBI conducted with Amir Erez, a professor of management at the University of Florida, participants who were treated rudely by other subjects *"were 30% less creative than others in the study. They produced 25% fewer ideas, and the ones they did come up with were less original."*

Productivity, Performance and team spirit deteriorate. In disharmonious workplaces, one of the most direct impacts is diminishing productivity. Bullies prevent work from getting done, causing chaos, confusion and a loss of focus. Most executives will give their ear if you ask to talk about an issue related to productivity. WBI Survey results and interviews indicate that simply witnessing bullying has negative consequences. In one experiment WBI conducted they reported *"We found that witnesses to bullying were less likely than others to help out, even when the person they'd be helping had no apparent connection to the uncivil person: Only 25% of the subjects who'd witnessed bullying volunteered to help, whereas 51% of those who hadn't witnessed it did"*.

Team instability. Team member turnover, increased sick leave and stress leave are a direct consequence of bullying. This is especially challenging for project teams and results in cost and time over runs. It also puts added pressure on the team members who remain, again with negative impacts on program success.

Human Resource Impacts:

The organizational impacts caused by bullying are particularly time, resource and money consuming for human resource, benefits and compensation personnel.

Sick Leave, Disability Claims: There is a direct link between bullying and sick-leave/disability claims. The stress and health impacts caused by bullying impacts not only profits when your top talent takes time off work, but also requires the engagement of HR personnel to manage each situation. The time spent by HR on these complex matters can add up very quickly, causing frustration and anxiety. Often, HR is well aware of the bullying problem and fear reprisals by senior management and/or the bully if they attempt to get involved. The bully is often well regarded by those in power as a “results-producing and problem-solving star”. HR, on the other hand, is dealing with the human and talent impacts left behind by the bully. While their role is to act in the interests of the organization, when they see top talent unable to work, they find themselves between a rock and a hard place. They also rarely have skills or training to engage with the bully, as these aren’t normal situations where traditional reasoned approaches are successful. Thus, the situation continues and expands as the bully finds new targets (which they always will).

Employee Turnover Costs: Bully-impacted targets and staff often end up quitting for one reason or another. Turnover costs include employer contributions to retirement plans for the departed worker, expenses to announce the job opening, head hunter/recruiting firm fees to recruit worthy replacement candidates, time spent by managers and staff to meet all candidates at meetings while getting no work done, hiring bonuses/incentives, and the harder-to-calculate lost production during the entire process that must be made up by coworkers.

Conflicts and Complaints: If organizations choose not to confront a bully, there will be an inevitable increase in conflicts, complaints and chaos wherever the bully works. This results in the consumption of HR and management time to work through the complaint processes that can be particularly taxing in a unionized environment. Since the organization isn’t prepared to deal with the bully, they then deal with unhappy, emotional, and unpredictable staff.

Legal:

Regardless of the existence of anti-bullying laws, bullies cost organizations money and time dealing with legal matters. Obviously, if there is legislation, then the costs and risks are much higher. The first place HR often turns for advice is legal professionals. Time spent risk managing, strategizing and preparing for the possibility of legal action with lawyers involved adds up quickly. There are also investigation costs that can require outside experts and significant costs. It is more and more common for targets to turn to legal recourse to solve the problem, costing enormous amounts of time, stress and money. Law firms see workplace bullying as a new source of legal work and some are even starting to research the possibility of class action litigation in particularly egregious bullying cases involving major corporations.

Further, courts are becoming more aware of workplace bullying with expected negative results for the companies that are found to have condoned and supported the bully. Finally,

severance costs regularly factor in. Often, it is in the legal and strategic best interests to resolve the problem by negotiating a severance deal with top talent alleging they have been bullied. However, this is very costly and fails to address the bully problem. If the remaining employees see that their former colleague left with her/his head held high and a pocket full of severance, executives should be alerted this will likely happen again unless they take action to eliminate the bully. All tolled, a single bully can cause hundreds of thousands and even millions of dollars in costs, just if one well-founded claim is successful, even before the matter gets anywhere near a court.

Reputation and Executive Job Security:

Every executive is concerned about their own and their organization's reputation. One only has to turn to the recent media-frenzy about allegations of a Darwinian work environment at Amazon to see that bullying can have serious impacts on organizational reputation. The writer refers to this as the "Amazon Effect". If your workplace is perceived as toxic, people inevitably gossip about it. They share their frustration with anyone willing to listen, which, in the case of Amazon, led to journalist engagement from the New York Times.

The Business Section article by Jodi Kantor and David Streitfeld on August 16, 2015 titled *"Inside Amazon: Wrestling Big Ideas in a Bruising Workplace"* had extraordinary global impact. In the article, after interviewing over 100 current and former Amazon employees, one quote sticks out for the writer. Bo Olsen, who lasted two years at Amazon, was quoted as saying, *"You walk out of a conference room and you'll see a grown man covering his face. Nearly every person I worked with, I saw cry at their desk."* Think of what such an event costs in public relations, communications, and lost time – a reputational event of Titanic proportions.

When a journalist interviews that many employees who tell the same unpleasant story, one can't help but think there is some merit to their consistent references to a toxic workplace culture and disrespect problem. Perhaps the one question to ask an executive who waffles about whether they should do everything in their power to eliminate workplace bullying should be – "What do you think this cost Amazon and how would you like to be the person in the media's bulls-eye?"

Fortune Magazine weighed in on the impact of the "Amazon Takedown" (their reference says it all), with one lesson that should have every executive running to revise their workplace bullying policies and processes – *"There are numerous lessons to be gained from considering Amazon, its culture, and its success—lessons that pertain to many other workplaces. Lesson one: The leaders we admire aren't always that admirable."*

Leaders should take note that their personal reputation may be in jeopardy. Most people aren't Jeff Bezos (C.E.O. of Amazon and fifth wealthiest man on the planet) and wouldn't have lasted a day longer in their job if this article exposed their organization in such negative light (just ask ex-Volkswagen CEO Martin Winterkorn). The bottom line is that executives should care about bullying because they might end up having a personal job security issue if they ignore it. They might also find it difficult to find a new role with a sullied reputation.

Profits, Share Value and Clean up:

Near the top of the pyramid in terms of issues that every senior executive worries about are profit and share value. Nothing will prevent a Board of Directors from taking action to terminate executives if they are exposed as being at the helm when an event that negatively impacted profits was mismanaged. Within days of the Amazon article being published, follow up articles surfaced that focused on the long-term impact on profits, share price, and clean up costs. In a Retail Dive article written three days after the New York Times article on August 19, 2015, writer Kelsey Lindsay, noted *“While Amazon may always be a love-it-or-leave-it company to work for, questions remain about what impact the article will have on the e-retailer’s business, and retail in general.”*

It bears noting that the real nail in coffin is the potential impact that a bullying workplace environment can have on share price. Again, using Amazon as a wonderful illustration of market forces at work, Amazon’s share price dropped from \$535.22 a share on Aug 17, 2015 to \$463.37 one week later. If that doesn’t get executives sweating, then I don’t know what might.

Customers/Clients:

Finally, we reach the top of the pyramid knowing that businesses fail if their customers lose faith in them. Most recently, the world has witnessed Volkswagen fall meteorically from grace losing billions of euros in share value and potentially jeopardizing the corporation’s future. All thanks to a decision to choose profits over ethics. This is a terrific lesson and wake up call for all organizations and plays perfectly into the issue of workplace bullying.

People are less likely to do business with a company with an employee they perceive as a bully or rude, even if the bullying isn’t directed at them. Disrespectful behaviour makes people uncomfortable, and they’re quick to cease business relations with an organization that permits bullying. People will judge organizations harshly and the tide is definitely turning towards a marketplace that is aware of the impacts of workplace bullying and won’t support organizations that don’t get on board.

This is supported by the rising number of nations that have passed laws making workplace bullying illegal and punish both the bully and the organization that condone their behaviour. Such legislation has been in place for years in most of the European Union, with France being at the vanguard viewing bullying as a health risk to employees. Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the United Kingdom also have laws in place. As of April 21, 2015, 29 states and 2 territories in the United States have introduced the Healthy Workplace Bill, the purpose of which is *“to provide legal redress for employees who have been harmed psychologically, physically or economically by deliberate exposure to abusive work environments and to provide legal incentives for employers to prevent and respond to abusive treatment of employees at work.”*

With our pyramid of impacts to provide cogent arguments and the recent examples of Amazon and Volkswagen fresh on the radar, it is the writer’s submission that both the readers and the bosses see the true conclusion of this exercise – the opportunity cost of failing to act

to prevent and eliminate workplace bullying is massive in comparison to becoming a change leader.

Employer Responsibility

Having the full attention and sincere engagement of the executives as to why they should take preventative action to eliminate workplace bullying, just in case they find it harder or more complex than expected, we should also empower them to soldier on using a few helpful reminders. Employers define all work conditions – respectful workplace policies, employee selection, job descriptions, work assignments, creation of the management group, compensation, leave policies, termination without cause (except in rare circumstances). So, bullying - the system - can only be sustained or eliminated by employers. However, everyone employed within an organization can play an anti-bullying advocate role to encourage change.

Exhibit 3 – It all Fits



Stopping bullying requires nothing less than turning the workplace culture upside down. Bullies must experience negative consequences for harming others. Punishment must replace promotions. And only executives and senior management can reverse the historical trend. To stop bullying requires employers to change the routine ways of "doing business" that have propped up bullies for years.

In conclusion, the ultimate solution fixes responsibility for both the cause and cure squarely on the shoulders of senior management and executives. They put people in harm's way and they can provide safety by undoing the culture that may have inadvertently allowed bullying to flourish. Of course, if executives instruct others to bully from the top, targeted employees can never be safe.



Exhibit 4 – A Bullying Action Plan

Anti-Bullying Action Plans for Organizations

As a reminder for both readers and the motivated executives to implement change, it helps to have an action plan, just like any sound project. Business-savvy organizations are taking increasingly proactive steps to confront workplace bullying, reinforcing the value of ethical awareness and policies predicated on building trust, protecting employees and instilling confidence in those who work for the organization and those who do business with them.

Anti-bullying advocates and experts offer tips to companies and managers. There are organizations that provide consulting services to companies that need help in negotiating organizational change to a bully-free workplace. Some of the most practical, proactive tips are the following:

- 1. Create clear, robust organizational anti-bullying policies and make training mandatory for everyone:** All organizations should establish clear and effective bullying policies and procedures for addressing bullying allegations. Training, awareness, and education are critical to the success of such policies. Human resources must be on board and not feel unprepared. If your organization has no anti-bullying policy, project managers should lobby hard for change.
- 2. Consider long-term project, program and organization well-being when addressing bullying:** While bullies create many negative, long-term problems, they are often highly intelligent, manipulative and laser-focused professionals that appear to get the job done where others have failed. Since workplace bullies often get short-term results, employers - particularly senior management level staff - too often tolerate them. Thus, in spite of their negative qualities, bullies often get away with abuse and even receive positive evaluations from their supervisors. However, it is far better to proactively and directly address the bullying than to permit spreading poison throughout the organization.
- 3. Lead by example from the top:** From the organization's highest levels, it should be made clear that bullying isn't acceptable. Even the slightest hint that it might be tolerated is often enough for a bully to cause damage. So, from the CEO, executive team, senior managers and project managers all the way down to lower-ranking staff, the message must be one of zero tolerance for bullying. Authenticity counts and leaders must show sincere commitment or the message will ring hollow.
- 4. Respond to all types bullying behavior:** Bullying often begins with small actions such as eye rolling, sneering, or demeaning a colleague, either in private or publicly. While such behavior may seem insignificant, it is unprofessional and everyone in the organization must be trained and capable to address it immediately. The effects of bullying arise from these types of indignities and often lead to more serious problems if left unchecked.
- 5. Establish fair, effective and safe methods to report alleged bullying:** Bullying isn't like other conflicts in the workplace. It requires specialized processes and methods for conflict resolution. First, an unbiased, safe and user-friendly complaints reporting process is essential. This works to everyone's benefit and will ensure

impartial, confidential and trustworthy processes. Remember, not every complaint has merit so it is important to protect everyone, including the alleged bully.

6. **Bullying investigations must be impartial, fair and fulsome:** In order for a staff or the organization as a whole to feel safe and have faith that it takes this issue seriously, it is essential that investigations are unbiased, free from political interference and result in appropriate responses if allegations are proven. An impartial investigator should be engaged to conduct this sensitive work and be permitted to speak to anyone who may have witnessed the activity (including former staff who left the organization). Fair treatment for all targets, bullies and witnesses is needed to engender trust in the process.
7. **Take bullying claims seriously but tread carefully:** Assuming a bullying allegation is merely a conflict between two work mates who should sort it out between themselves represents a misunderstanding of bullying. It's much more one-way and requires authoritative intervention. Take bullying allegations seriously, but don't assume they're true – that is for the investigation process to determine. Ensure that you take the initiative to respond and report and let the experts take over.
8. **Normal conflict resolution processes won't work with bullies:** It is naïve to think that you can reason with a bully. Consequently, mediation is simply another opportunity for the bully to misbehave and instill fear in the target. This is an organizational problem that requires impactful decision-making authority, not a compromise-seeking session. Thus binding arbitration is normally the best process to use. Often, the organization will find it doesn't get this far. If the investigation determines a finding of bullying one of two things often happens – the organization fires the bully or the bully leaves of her/his own accord. Once it is clear that their reign of power has ended or that their "leadership style" is no longer acceptable, they head for the hills. Bullies rarely are prepared to acknowledge and be accountable for their behavior.

Motivation to Be Change Leaders

Perhaps the writer has been too hard on executives and organizational leaders in criticizing them for often failing to grasp why workplace bullying is bad for business. I'm fully aware of the broad pressure on them to get the results that shareholders, customers and boards demand. In some ways, this becomes a choice – to focus on results (and risk a Volkswagen-like day of reckoning) or to choose to value your people, firmly believing they will produce even better results in a bully-free workplace. It is the writer's position that it is within each one of us to play a role to transform our values and organizations.

Jeffrey Pfeffer is the Thomas D. Dee II Professor of Organizational Behavior at the Graduate School of Business, Stanford University. In his August 18, 2015, Fortune Magazine article about the "takedown" of Amazon he concludes: *"In the end, "Amazonians" are not that different from other people in their psychological dynamics. Their company is just a more extreme case of what many other organizations regularly do. And most importantly, let's locate the problem, if there is one, and its solution where it most appropriately belongs—not*

with a CEO who is greatly admired (and wealthy beyond measure) running a highly admired company, but with a society where money trumps human well-being and where any price, maybe even lives, is paid for status and success.”

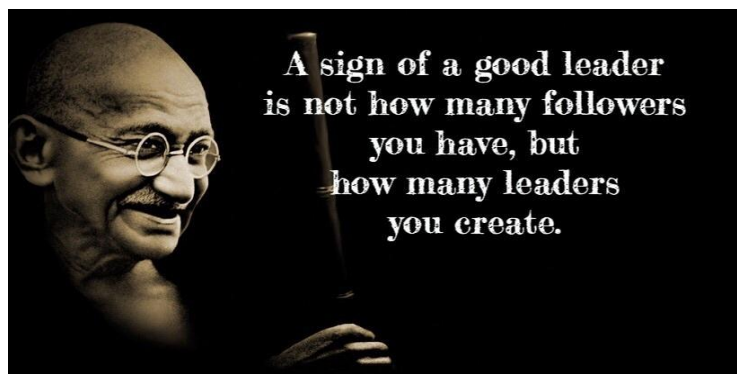
This is a profound statement for each of us to consider. The writer encourages everyone to consider how we might be contributing to the problem. Perhaps some encouraging words from one of the world’s most influential leaders is needed:

“You have enemies? Good. That means you’ve stood up for something, sometime in your life”. Winston Churchill, Former Prime Minister of the United Kingdom

Conclusion

It is the writer’s hope that ten years from now no one in the business world will be interested in a workplace bully securing short term results at the expense of the host of negative impacts that he/she caused to get those results. There won’t be a CEO or President or Chair of the Board that fails to understand bullies are bad for business. Societies around the world will also value the quality of our workplaces and rewards those that embrace workplace respect.

The good news is that increased global organizational and public awareness, recent research, and expanding illegalization of workplace bullying are having positive impacts. Employers around the world are becoming more informed of the many negative impacts and costs associated with workplace bullying. If employers and senior executives take initiative in addressing bullying early on, much larger financial, ethical, legal, human resource and project problems will be avoided. Eventually, these initiatives will lead to wider support for zero tolerance for bullying in the workplace regardless of circumstance, societal norm, or jurisdiction.



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About the Author



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