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LEAP



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Multiple Angles on Bullying

The record-breaking Japanese television drama Hanzawa Naoki stirred up heavy discussion a while back. Some attribute the show's success to its reification of the working class' perspective. It is not infrequent for that some employees to experience feelings of being bullied in a workplace where unfair treatment and deprivation are a commonplace.

However, before examining the prevention and handling of bullying situations in the workplace, it is helpful to first define "workplace bullying". Among our handled cases, a fraction sought assistance for problems with workplace relationships. A number of them reported "feeling bullied" or deprived, such as isolation from coworkers, unfair workload division, close monitoring from supervisor, or unapproved annual leave application, etc. However, such situations may instead be accountable to discrepancies between management strategies and staff's expectations. When one adopts a dichotomous mindset and negative thoughts, plus assume a "victim" role, they might fall prey to "false bullying".

In fact, for workplace bullying to meet its necessary criteria, it has to: 1) be consistently repeated; 2) take place over a significant duration of time; 3) be done with intent; 4) pose threat to the health and safety of the victim, who 5) lacks the power to protect themselves. In short, workplace bullying occurs when a person or group persistently uses harsh and unreasonable methods to repeatedly target another coworker or subordinate, thereby threatening his or her health and safety. The leading actor in Hanzawa Naoki was precisely experiencing bullying as defined by the above.

Nonetheless, regardless of the nature of bullying, it is essential for management to develop a standard procedure for handling complaints on workplace bullying properly and consider whether in-depth investigation is needed. For the most severe form of bullying, which involves violence and attack, it is inevitable to inform the police. Employees should also clearly distinguish whether they are bullied, and if so, do speak up and inform relevant parties. On the other hand, when unpleasant misunderstanding occurs, one could try switching perspectives, which can help lead the way away from negative emotions.

LEAP 是指：

L eading Personal Effectiveness
發展人才

E nhancing Family Cohesiveness
凝聚家庭

A chieving Team Success
卓越團隊

P romoting Corporate Wellness
促進企業健康

Caring Organization : Getting More than Expected in Return

There has been a metaphor: Even though 100% of leakages are repaired, the boat still would not move. Only when the sail (personal strengths) is activated can you start your journey and overcome high tides. When workplace bullying occurs, it is certainly essential for the company to handle it properly and effectively. However, it is insufficient in helping enterprises achieve success. To establish business advantage, it is vital for companies to promote a positive corporate culture and to put forth efforts in nurturing a harmonious and caring working environment. This can not only proactively prevent workplace bullying but can also enhance staff engagement. In turn, this could create greater return than expected for the company.

According to our latest Positive Organizational Index research, three companies achieved an excellent level of positive performance, which was reached by few companies. Representatives from the three companies were invited to share their invaluable experiences and strategies on fostering a positive workplace in our EAP Forum 2013. We believe that these policies would be useful and effective in preventing workplace bullying.

Ms Eliza Ng, Director of Human Resources of Fuji Xerox (Hong Kong) Limited, shared that the company endeavors to create a "family" atmosphere in the workplace in order to enhance staff members' engagement. To promote "work-life balance", the company has hired massage professionals to provide in-office massages for staff and invited school teachers to hold talks on family education. Simultaneously, the company has opened up various channels for staff members to express their opinions, e.g. electronic suggestion box, in order to enhance communication and harmony between staff and management. Moreover, staff members are encouraged to write thank-you cards to other colleagues to show appreciation for others' work. All these measures reiterate the company's recognition of its staff's efforts and create a positive, cordial atmosphere in the company.

Gammon Construction Limited was another company that achieved an excellent level on the Positive Organization Index and Mr Edmond Lai, the company's Director of Human Resources, shared the company's positive and enthusiastic measures in developing a harmonious workplace. With the belief care between the company and its employees are reciprocal, the company is diligent in understanding its staff's needs and opinions (e.g. salary, facilities, welfare) through establishing a two-way communication mechanism between construction site workers and managerial staff. In addition, the company has also assigned health ambassadors to provide basic body check and health information on construction sites.

The last speaker was Dr Jimmy Lau, CEO and founder of Richform Holdings Limited. Dr Lau emphasized that every staff member, rather than the management solely, shares the responsibility of fostering a positive organization. For instance, staff members had been arranged to participate in laughter yoga exercise during the lunch hour; happy smileys are also stuck everywhere around the office to remind colleagues to maintain cheerful mood. The company has also introduced an unusual caring policy, "Parents Remuneration", a dedication for staff's parents aged 65 or above to express the company's gratitude toward their children's contribution to the company. Dr Lau concluded that all his policies are based upon a belief: only when an employer sincerely cares about their staff would staff be happy and content; in turn, happy staff are willing devote themselves to the company and high quality service will then come through. Finally, this is followed by enhanced customer satisfaction and loyalty.

The success of these three companies exemplify that fact that caring enterprises not only increase cohesion and staff engagement, but also foster a harmonious atmosphere, thereby reducing the chances of bullying in the office.



Hammond has been feeling lost and frustration with his job for a while. He shared his issues with the Sage. The Sage scooped some water up and asked Hammond, "What is the shape of the water?"

Hammond shook his head and said, "How can water have any shape?"

The Sage did not respond, and poured water into a cup. Hammond suddenly came to realization, "The shape of the water is like a cup." Again, the Sage did not answer and poured water into a bottle. Hammond said, "The shape of the water is like a bottle."

The Sage shook his head. He lifted the bottle lightly and poured the water into a bucket filled with sand. Seeing the water blend with the sand then disappear, Hammond fell into deep thoughts.

The Sage leaned over, grabbed some sand, and exclaimed, "The water is gone – so is life!"

Hammond digested this for some time, and suddenly said, "The workplace is like different containers. People are like water and take whatever shape their container takes."

"It is so," the Sage said, and then again, "but not quite so!" He then left the house with Hammond following behind.

They stood under the house roof. The Sage crouched down, touched a slate for a moment and stopped. Hammond placed his finger onto where the Sage was touching and felt a concavity. He did not understand what the meaning behind this concavity is.

The Sage explained, "Look! The rain falls from the roof. This dent is the result of rain water hitting the slate through time."

Hammond finally realized, "People may sometimes be confined in containers, but these little raindrops have the capability to alter hard slate." The Sage replied, "Yes, this dent will eventually become a hole." "I have found my answer!" Hammond exclaimed.

The Sage responded with silence and a smile. Hammond was inspired to re-discover his role in the workplace.

We may at times find ourselves bound by the external environment or rules, which may be inflexible. However, people are malleable and can adapt themselves to the larger whole. When faced with a situation that seems unchangeable, the wisest choice is to alter something of your own and tune your mindset, which helps dealing with distress.

