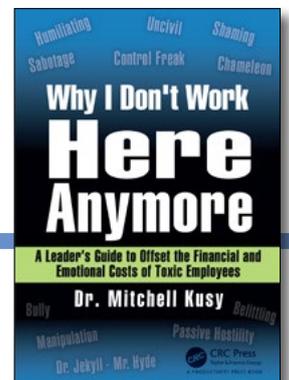


# BUSINESS INSIGHTS: 5 NO-NONSENSE STRATEGIES TO DEAL WITH TOXIC EMPLOYEES

BY DR. MITCHELL KUSY

Author of *Why I Don't Work Here Anymore: A Leader's Guide to Offset the Financial and Emotional Costs of Toxic Employees*



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## INTRODUCTION

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Toxic employees not only get under our skin, but also erode the financial worth of any organization. In one study I conducted with Dr. Holloway, we found that a whopping 94% of over 400 leaders reported dealing with the devastation caused by these chameleons who “knock down but kiss up.” In *Why I Don't Work Here Anymore*, I present the proactive solutions to prevent these individuals from ever entering your organization, along with the reactive ways to deal with them once they're there. This snapshot culls out some of the most pressing issues leaders face related to toxic people—those who shame others, attempt to motivate through passive-aggression, and sabotage the work of others. I envision that the evidence-based research I present will astound you with the droves of employees who quit because of a toxic person, the impact they have on team performance, and their emotional and financial impact on others. Prepare to be enlightened and ready to roll up your sleeves and do something now.

### Use these strategies to cope with toxic employees:

1. CALCULATE THE FINANCIAL COSTS
2. REVAMP YOUR PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM
3. GIVE FEEDBACK THAT WORKS
4. RECRUIT BETTER AND FIRE SOONER
5. IT TAKES A VILLAGE

## CALCULATE THE FINANCIAL COSTS OF TOXIC PEOPLE

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1

***You may have experienced the emotional cost of having a toxic employee in your workplace, but have you considered the financial cost?***

Many leaders know firsthand the emotional toll employees experience with their toxic colleagues— defined as those who shame one-on-one or in public, are passively hostile, or sabotage individual or team efforts. But most leaders are not aware that the financial costs of these behaviors can be calculated as well. In *Why I Don't Work Here Anymore*, I provide a formula to identify the specific monetary devastation caused by toxic employees—not in a generic sense but actually in your organization. How does this help you deal with toxic employees? Money often talks. When leaders understand the financial impact, there is much more fire in their bellies to do something about this. And fire does create action!

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**A toxic employee shames one-on-one or in public, is passively hostile, or sabotages individual or team efforts.**

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## REVAMP YOUR PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

2

***Measuring your employees on both the quality of their work and their adherence to company values can help weed out toxic employees whose behaviors do not represent your organization well.***

In my work with hundreds of organizations worldwide, I have discovered that approximately 95% have performance appraisal forms—good news! However, only 20% have organizational values identified on this form. Worse yet, only 5% measure how employees perform on these values. Why is the measurement of values so important? First, toxic people often violate the organizational values. Second, it's difficult to fire toxic individuals because they often lament that no one else is measured against the organization's values. And they are right! Fortunately, in *Why I Don't Work Here Anymore* I provide an antidote to counter this "righteousness" with a process whereby 70% of performance discussions focus on the employee's "real work" and 30% on the "values." This will increase your success in dealing with toxic people.

Only 5% of organizations measure how employees perform on company values.

## GIVE FEEDBACK THAT WORKS

3

***How can you most effectively give feedback that will resonate with toxic employees? Is feedback always warranted for everyone?***

Many leaders stumble in giving feedback to toxic employees—whether peers, direct reports, or even their boss! My cost-benefit strategy will help you determine whether you should even give feedback to any one of these individuals! If feedback is warranted, then there are three strategies to tap into. The direct report strategy provides a template for the best way to give feedback to your toxic direct reports. Through the peer strategy, you will be able to target several evidence-based methods that work with peers. The boss strategy is a respectful way to help bosses understand how their behaviors impact you and others—without being fired on the spot! I hope my clear and concrete templates and sample case conversations provide further realistic roadmaps for action.

## RECRUIT BETTER AND FIRE SOONER

4

***The best way to prevent the ill effects of toxic employees is to make sure they are not hired in the first place! But, if you find yourself losing talent because of a toxic employee, a strategic and novel exit interview can help you get the inside story.***

In *Why I Don't Work Here Anymore*, I present several easy-to-engage recruiting methods that will reduce the probability of hiring a toxic person. For example, with those toxic people who have the "knock down but kiss up" chameleon syndrome, this book presents a method to uncover

Toxic behaviors are not always obvious to management – dig deeper.

hidden, toxic behaviors during the recruiting process. I further identify concrete tools with the ultimate goal of how to avoid hiring a toxic individual. I also tackle the traditional exit interviews because these typically don't ferret out toxic people who are causing good people to leave. Why? Because some exiting individuals don't tell the truth when they quit because of fear in that their statements about toxic people may come to "haunt" them later. I demonstrate how to use the exit interview in new and productive ways.

# 5

## IT TAKES A VILLAGE

***Make your company a comfortable environment for good employees – and an uncomfortable environment for toxic ones – by making a conscious shift in your corporate culture towards everyday civility.***

"It takes a village," so they say, to create a culture where toxic people don't get away with bad behavior. In *Why I Don't Work Here Anymore*, I help leaders understand the steps needed for instilling a culture of everyday civility. What can leaders do to "walk the talk"? How do they integrate values into daily conversations? How does a leader design a large-scale culture change effort to understand a system that enables toxic people to get away with bad behavior? Ultimately, to build a culture of everyday civility, I conclude this book with a self-report checklist that summarizes all the potential actions that address these questions and many more that leaders have about creating a culture of respectful engagement.

## CONCLUSION

By changing toxic behaviors one step at a time, teaching others what and why you are doing this, and gradually tackling longer-term strategies will put you on the road to improved individual, team, and organizational performance. I conclude this book with the demonstration of one important mantra—To be a leader is to teach; if you're not teaching, you're not leading.

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*Dr. Mitchell Kusy, a 2005 Fulbright Scholar in organization development, is a professor in Antioch University's Graduate School of Leadership & Change. He has previously headed leadership development and organization development at American Express Financial Advisors and HealthPartners. Consulting nationally and internationally, Dr. Kusy has authored dozens of professional articles and six business books.*

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To learn more about Dr. Kusy's book, *Why I Don't Work Here Anymore: A Leader's Guide to Offset the Financial and Emotional Costs of Toxic Employees*, publishing November 11, 2017, visit [www.crcpress.com/9781138303263](http://www.crcpress.com/9781138303263).

Also, be sure to keep an eye out for more snapshots in the **Business Insights** series coming soon.

