

# Example of report on workplace health and safety campaign on workplace bullying

[Law](#), [Criminal Justice](#)



With workplace bullying becoming a growing concern in ensuring a safe and healthy workplace environment, this paper proposes a campaign to promote workplace health and safety against workplace bullying.

Workplace bullying is a personalized and repeated attack on one colleague by another colleague, which results in the victim being socially excluded, losing their job, or becoming physically and mentally unhealthy. Research shows that workplace bullying occurs due to personality differences, economic and social trends, diversity, workplace competition, rewards for aggressive behavior, stressful work conditions, and organizational culture.

In this light, a campaign to address workplace bullying is important as researchers show that a healthy and safe work environment, along with satisfied employees, can lead to a positive impact on the organization's bottom line. As such, the following are proposed as the campaign's contents:

New Code of Ethics that highlight the need for respect and tolerance

Pamphlet containing information on the various anti-discrimination and anti-harassment laws in Australia

Information sheet on workplace bullying

Flyer containing a schedule of activities (trainings, focused group discussions, conferences, etc.)

E-learning courses

Posters

It is further proposed that the campaign be launched in a general town hall meeting or in a town hall meeting especially held for the campaign.

## **Definitions of Workplace Bullying**

Workplace bullying is “ a personalized, often sustained attack on one colleague by another colleague using behaviors, which are emotionally and psychologically punishing” (Oade, 2010, p. 2). It involves a dynamic where a colleague purposely attempts to injure another colleague’s reputation, self-confidence, and self-esteem or undermine the other colleague’s competence in effectively carrying out their duties. In addition, workplace bullying involves behavior where the bully removes power from their colleague and places it with themselves. Similarly, Einarsen, et al. (2010) indicate that workplace bullying consists of

repeated actions and practices that are directed against one or more workers; that are

unwanted by the victim; that may be carried out deliberately or unconsciously, but clearly

cause humiliation, offense, and distress; and that may interfere with work performance

and/or cause an unpleasant working environment. (Einarsen et al., 2010, p. 9)

Workplace bullying pertains to situations where hostile behavior is exhibited towards one or more colleagues, in turn leading to these colleagues being victimized and stigmatized (Einarsen et al., 2010).

## **Research to Support Proposal**

There is increasing evidence, which shows that frequent and persistent bullying and hostile behaviors can have negative implications for the well-being of the community, the family, the organization, and the individual (Keashly & Jagatic, 2010). As such, it is important for organizations to implement workplace health and safety management programs in order to address workplace bullying. This is especially important because of the serious damage it causes on the health of the victims (Einarsen et al., 2010). Moreover, workplace bullying is considered a social stressor because it affects the quality of social interactions that an employee has within the workplace. It can also lead to critical life events such as the victim's career prospects being destroyed; physical threats; or threats of work dismissal. In addition, the victim can lose social support and the ability to control their situation. As shown by the results of a study conducted by Zapf and Einarsen (as cited in Einarsen et al, 2010), ordinary coping strategies such as the tackling of problems do not work for victims of bullying.

According to Field (as cited in Einarsen et al., 2010), a victim of workplace bullying can become withdrawn and hesitant to communicate for fear of being criticized. In turn, this can result in the employee being accused of lack of team spirit, not communicating or cooperating, sullenness, and withdrawal among others. In addition, the victim may become dependent on alcohol or other substances, which can lead to a failing memory, a lack of concentration, and poor performance.

The victim often feels helpless and incurs prolonged sickness absences in order to cope with the situation. It may even lead to the employee's role within the organization being diminished or completely eliminated. In addition, studies conducted by Zapf and Gross (as cited in Einarsen et al., 2010) showed that victims of workplace bullying who end up leaving the organization encourage other victims to leave as well and to just seek support elsewhere.

As indicated by Giacalone, Swanson & Promislo (2012), the immediate consequences of social exclusion include the victim feeling sad, hurt, angry, ashamed, lonely, and even violent. Subsequently, it can lead to social isolation, which is strongly related to unhappiness. It can also cause anxiety and reduced self-esteem and can even affect the victim's physical well-being. Furthermore, research shows that victims are prone to exhibit self-defeating, irrational, unhealthy, and risky behaviors (Giacalone, Swanson & Promislo, 2012).

Perhaps more alarming is that no matter how severe the situation becomes, work colleagues and the management team are often reluctant to take the necessary action in order to support the victim. On the contrary, the victim is often perceived to be at fault. In particular, the victim's complaints are often met with questions and disbelief. Senior management, trade union representatives, and administrative personnel often believe the prejudices promoted by the offender against the victim; thus, blaming the victim for their predicament.

Research that investigated why workplace bullying occurred showed personality differences to be one of the factors (Daniel, 2009). In particular, a United States-based study showed that 56% of the recipients claimed that workplace bullying occurred because of the bully's personality while 20% claimed that it was because of the target's personality or noted performance deficiencies (Daniel, 2009). Moreover, Yamada (as cited in Daniel, 2009) suggested that workplace bullying occurs because of economic and social trends such as the growth of the service sector economy, the global profit squeeze, the diversification of the workforce, and the increased dependence on contingent workers. Similarly, Neuman (as cited in Daniel, 2009) suggested that workplace bullying occurs because of differences in gender, age, beliefs, personalities, and culture.

In addition, Namie (as cited in Daniel, 2009) suggested that workplace bullying occurred because employers implicitly rewarded aggression at work where bullies are often rewarded through positive recognition or promotions. As such, employees are encouraged to behave aggressively. Similarly, organizational culture can play an important role in the manifestation of workplace bullying if such behavior seems to be tolerated. This can lead to employees perceiving this type of behavior as normal and something which the work climate encourages and supports.

As well, stressful work conditions may contribute to aggression in the workplace, such as when there are noise, crowding, or uncomfortable temperatures (Daniel, 2009). Employees who work under immense pressure

and stress also tend to have diminished capabilities when it comes to exhibiting niceties, which can then lead to interpersonal conflict.

Studies show that providing employees with a safe and healthy work environment leads not only to happier, more satisfied, and more productive employees but also to a more successful organization. For example, a study conducted by Christian, Bradley, Wallace & Burke (2009) showed that safety motivation and safety knowledge promoted safety-related behaviors and that a group safety climate and a psychological safety climate further encouraged these behaviors. Moreover, this study showed that a group safety climate contributed most to the prevention of injuries and accidents within the workplace (Christian et al., 2009).

In the same regard, the results of a study conducted by Nahrgang, Morgeson & Hofmann (2011) suggested that organizations should develop a supportive environment by providing supervisors with leadership trainings, by establishing the value of safety, and by stressing the importance of social support and teamwork. The researchers asserted that the establishment of a supportive environment would benefit organizations from all industries (Nahrgang, Morgeson & Hofmann, 2011). They further indicated that a supportive environment would enable the organization not only to achieve a safe workplace but also increase the health and motivation of the employees (Nahrgang, Morgeson & Hofmann, 2011). In the same regard, Broadbent (2006) demonstrates the link between profitability and employee satisfaction through the following:

Profit and growth are stimulated primarily by customer loyalty. Loyalty is a direct result of customer satisfaction. Satisfaction is largely influenced by the value of services provided to customers. Value is created by satisfied, loyal, and productive employees. Employee satisfaction, in turn, results primarily from high-quality support services and policies that enable employees to deliver results to customers. (Heskett et al., as cited in Broadbent, 2006, p. 2)

## **Brief Company Description**

This campaign is proposed for a company in the IT industry. The demographics of the workforce in this type of company would mostly consist of young urban professionals who are innovative and brimming with creative ideas. On the other hand, majority of the management team would consist of more senior employees who may be more traditional and conservative in their ways. These differences in age and perspectives, as well as the high degree of competitiveness among the employees who all want to advance in their careers, increase the possibility of interpersonal conflicts occurring, which in the end may lead to workplace bullying. Moreover, with this type of company being greatly exposed to technology, it would be even easier for employees to engage in aggressive and unbecoming behavior through the use of such technology. Examples would include flaming, derogatory remarks over social media websites, and the sabotage of someone's work (e. g. tampering with or deleting a colleague's work files, as well as delaying tactics used in collaborative projects so that the targets are blamed for the delay instead of the perpetrator).



## **Campaign Content**

Copy of the organization's new Code of Ethics where the need for respect and tolerance are highlighted. Management should spearhead the development of a culture that promotes respect and tolerance (Randle, 2006). This culture should be oriented towards diversity, as bullying often occurs as a result of the differences that individuals have. As such, management should model, promote, and reward behaviors that show respect for individual differences in terms of age, religion, disability, race, gender, and personality. By explicitly requiring employees to demonstrate respect and tolerance for diversity in the organization's Code of Ethics, the employees will get a sense of the seriousness and relevance of the matter and as such, will also most likely take the campaign seriously.

Pamphlet containing an overview of the anti-discrimination and anti-harassment laws in Australia. This pamphlet should contain brief overviews of the various Australian laws that are against discrimination and harassment (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2007). Links or URLs will also be provided as to where the employees can get more information about the laws.

Information sheet on workplace bullying. The employees should also be given an information sheet on what workplace bullying is, how they will know if they are being bullied, and what they can do if they become a victim of such. This will serve as a part of the employee's education about workplace bullying. Since there are so many misconceptions about workplace bullying, providing them with more information about it will enable them to correct

any misconceptions that they may have about it. This will enable them to protect themselves against such situations and will enable them to feel protected in that they would know that there's something they can do or that there's someone they can approach in order to prevent or address incidents of workplace bullying.

Flyer containing a schedule of activities regarding workplace bullying. It is not enough to provide the employees with printed information. In order to make the campaign more effective, the organization should also hold a series of trainings, conferences, or seminars where experts can talk about and thoroughly explain the various facets and aspects of workplace bullying. These events will also give the employees a chance to raise questions and ask for clarifications. In addition, these activities can include focused group discussions where the employees can freely discuss their thoughts and opinions on the subject. Moreover, these events should include trainings or orientations on what employees can do or who they should approach if they become victims or witnesses to incidents of workplace bullying.

E-learning courses. E-learning courses about the nature and prevention of workplace bullying should also be made available to the employees in order to provide them with resources, which they can easily go back to for future reference. These e-learning courses should also include vignettes in order to further promote understanding and awareness of workplace bullying and its repercussions.

Posters. Posters that promote a safe work environment should be posted around the office premises. These will serve as a reminder to the employees about the organization's mission and vision with regards to creating a healthy and safe work environment for all the organizational members.

## **Presentation**

The presentation of the campaign can begin with teasers being sent via email to the employees or by having the teasers displayed on posters around the office premises. This is a good way to perk up the interest of the employees and to prime them for the change or the initiative that's about to take place.

## **When the time comes to formally launch the campaign, the announcement or presentation**

of the campaign may be done in either a general town hall meeting or in a town hall meeting especially held for the launching of the campaign. In this meeting, members of the senior management team can talk about what the campaign is about and why the management sees a need for holding the campaign. This will allow the employees to see that senior management supports and strongly advocates for the initiative. This will also enable them to understand the importance of the initiative and how they will benefit from it. As well, presenting the campaign in a meeting such as this will allow the employees to raise questions for the senior management team. In addition, the campaign materials, such as the pamphlets, flyers, and others, may also be distributed to the employees before or during the meeting.

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