



CASE STUDY: Relationship Audit

Problem

With a reputation for having a family-oriented culture, a small manufacturing firm in Northern California was an employer of choice in its locale. Production was up and turnover was low, so from the CEO's perspective everything seemed to be just fine.

But the CFO (who also oversaw the HR function) was hearing complaints about bullying. The director of operations, who had started as an intern in college and worked his way up over time, was accused of being volatile, bottlenecking information, and even making people do unsafe work to meet production demands. The CEO was surprised by these observations – he had grown to value this director and had somewhat of a mentor/protégé relationship with him.

Recognizing that this might be a blind spot – a real, but previously overlooked problem - he asked the CFO to investigate further.

Solution

Desiring a positive outcome for all of the employees involved, and knowing that bullying can be a complicated tenuous problem, the firm called on Civility Partners to bring their expertise, diagnose the situation and recommend actions that would produce the most compassionate, effective result.

What this company needed was an audit of the relationships in question. First this firm needed to determine once and for all that bullying was present. If there was, they could fix it. Bullying is about relationships and communication, so this type of audit provided a powerful look at bullying, as well as other problems in the organization.

Through diagnosis, Civility Partners discovered that the firm's **workplace climate had become inconspicuously toxic as a result of this one individual's behavior**. In fact, many interviewees indicated that they were looking for a new job, and were aware that many other people were too.

The audit uncovered numerous other issues as well, including:

- The director of operations and the sales team shared conflicting perspectives to achieving and measuring success using the sales process.
- The supervisors lacked supervisory skills, and needed development to improve their approaches to giving feedback, resolving conflict, and other behaviors that maximize performance and improve morale.
- The performance management process was ineffective, and employees felt it happened “under the radar.”
- Several operational processes lacked accountability, which indicated a need to address some performance issues.

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Finally, through her interview with the CEO, Mattice discovered that the CEO's goals were three-fold: 1) rule the industry, 2) ensure everyone is communicating well with each other, and 3) ensure everyone is focused on the good of the whole organization.

As a result of the audit, the CEO agreed to several initiatives, including:

- Leadership coaching for the director of operations
- A conflict mediator for the operations and sales teams, so that they could agree on a sales process
- Implementing supervisory skills training to give supervisors and managers the tools they needed to maximize performance
- Revamping the performance management process
- Addressing the lack of accountability in some of the organizational processes through training and performance coaching

Key Results

Results of these initiatives included:

- Retention of the director of operations, who could now lead in-line with the CEO's vision
- Retention of those employees who had previously been looking for other jobs
- Improved turnaround time for product, which meant improved customer satisfaction
- Increased job satisfaction due to a more positive culture and the managers' opportunities to learn and grow through training programs
- Increased performance now that poor performance could be spotted and addressed through coaching
- Improved organizational processes and more accountability

Now, the organization was well on its way to "ruling the industry."

Catherine M. Mattice, MA, SPHR, SHRM-SCP has been successfully providing programs in workplace bullying and building positive workplaces since 2007. Her clients include Chevron, the American Red Cross, the military, several universities and hospitals, government agencies, small businesses and nonprofits. She has published in a variety of trade magazines and has appeared several times on national affiliates of FOX, NBC, and ABC as an expert, as well as in *USA Today*, *Inc Magazine*, *Huffington Post*, *Entrepreneur Magazine*, and *MSNBC.com*. Catherine is Past-President of the American Society of Training & Development (ASTD), San Diego Chapter. In his book foreword, Ken Blanchard called her book, ***BACK OFF! Your Kick-Ass Guide to Ending Bullying at Work***, "the most comprehensive and valuable handbook on the topic." It is available in all major online bookstores. Her second book, ***SEEKING CIVILITY: How Leaders, Managers and HR Can Create a Workplace Free of Bullying***, is also available on Amazon.



[Click here to view a 3 min sample of Catherine's keynote on workplace bullying.](#)

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