



# CREATE A POSITIVE CULTURE

## How to Cure Negativity in Your Organization

Anyone who has ever experienced a negative work environment knows how unproductive and demoralizing it can be for the company, managers and employees. No one feels good about being part of such an organization, including customers. Unfortunately, negativity is often contagious and can rapidly create a toxic culture in your company. Because it is difficult to reverse once it starts, the best medicine is prevention, but negativity can also be cured, through smart, diligent management. There are several steps you should take.

### The Causes

Many things can trigger and contribute to a negative work environment. Diagnosing the cause is a key to improving the situation and avoiding its return. Among the more common causes are:

- Changes in policies or procedures that are not fully understood or accepted
- New pay or benefits policies that are viewed as less attractive
- Changes in management assignments
- Reduction in your workforce
- Management decisions or actions perceived as unfair or biased
- Financial challenges in your company that employees perceive
- The success of competitors that affects your company
- Loss of key or popular employees

- Erroneous information or rumors about your company
- A recently hired employee or disgruntled worker with a poor attitude
- Many other factors

You and your management team should proactively avoid having these and other issues occur (or spiral out of control) through good management practices and strong leadership.

### Solutions

If a negative tone should reveal itself within your organization, take swift action to identify its cause(s) and remedy the situation. The primary tool for diagnosis and cure is communication. Specific steps for preventing and treating negativity include:

- Setting the right tone for your organization through your words and actions
- Proactively addressing issues that affect your employees and company
- Opening lines of communication through employee meetings, written or electronic feedback vehicles, regular informal dialog and more
- Keeping your employees in the loop as much as possible regarding the state of your company and things that could affect them – avoid negative surprises
- Creating a “safe” environment for employees to air their concerns to you and other management staff



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- Educating, retraining and coaching negative employees – if these efforts fail, termination may be the only cure
- Strongly discouraging gossip and unproductive complaining among workers
- Publicly answering negativity with facts and logic, not defensiveness
- Supporting and rewarding, "can-do" team members
- Encouraging employees to appropriately and constructively raise concerns, problems and other issues before they fester into negativity
- Making it clear that unconstructive attitudes and communication will not be tolerated
- Following through on commitments you make and conversations you have with your employees

Make sure to take a good look in the mirror to view yourself as your employees and management team see you. Stress, fatigue and intensity could be misinterpreted as negativity and may be part of the problem. As a leader, you are responsible for rising above the challenges you face and setting the right tone for your company.