

Kvetching about co-workers, employees, a favorite pasttime

Last but not least, I'm ending the three part series on relationships with co-workers. As most of the people who buy Street Roots from me are employed, I thought I'd jump into the wonderful world of how to deal with co-workers. This, however, can be a touchy subject, so I hope that what follows will be of assistance to you in dealing with your fellow employees.

Over the years I worked for several different businesses doing accounting work. In some cases I had staffs working for me ranging from 10 to 25 people. As a manager, it is your function to set a smooth course in the office, or wherever your place of business is. This means that you try as hard as you can to keep everyone on an even keel, and get the work done that everyone is getting paid for.

Now that I've given you the ideal situation, let's face reality. In most cases, there is always at least one in the company that tries everyone's patience. Some employees do crazy things, and it often disrupts the flow of the office, or warehouse, or restaurant, etc.

How we deal with this can determine a lot of factors as to how all of the other employees react.

Some of my customers will vent a little bit to me about things going on around them at work. I listen to them, and if they ask, I'll tell them what I would do in their place. This of course is not a final decision on how they will act, but at least it plants a seed in their minds as to how to deal with it. The most common complaint I hear is about a person who is always late for work, talks too much during the day, is calling in sick a lot, has to leave early for an appointment,

MY CORNER

John Thompson



John Thompson sells Street Roots at the corner of 12th and Couch in Northwest Portland. He also volunteers at Julia West House, and enjoys helping folks with financial questions.

etc. What workers do not seem to realize is that if they are not there, someone else has to do their job.

Years ago, I took a three-day seminar called Human Factors. Perhaps some of you have had the pleasure of these three days in hell, (I'm chuckling here) but I did learn a few things that helped me in the management end of dealing with people. The first rule was to be open, honest, and direct with people. Now remember, this was before the current philosophy of being politically correct. What I did was to evaluate the situation that was happening, and then usually called the person in my office for a chat. Believe it or not, managers can see things going on at work and they should react accordingly.

I would tell the employee what I thought was a problem, and then let them explain their side. It usually ended up with a mutual agreement to change certain behaviors and make the work place a good place for the employees to be in. If the employee could not see the problem, as sometimes happened, I would say that the following is what I expect to be done. This was the first verbal warning.

If I missed something, usually another

employee would come to me and let me know that there was a problem in the office. I would evaluate the information to see if it was genuine and if it was, I'd deal with it as soon as possible. The biggest problem of not dealing with an employee issue is that it will fester and make others uncomfortable in this environment. Personnel issues must be dealt with as quickly as possible. If you are an employee, you must ask your supervisor to assist in dealing with whatever issue that is interrupting the work. If you are the supervisor, you must react quickly to make sure that the rest of the employees are secure in the knowledge that adverse situations are being resolved.

The other course of action is for you to confront the employee yourself and inform them of what you see as activities that are not constructive or conducive to the well being of the work place. However, be advised that this may end up in a negative way. They may become quite defensive and any hope of them changing may be shattered. You pay your money and take your chances on this gambit. It probably would have worked 20 years ago, but now in the politically correct era, it may not.

Therefore, I think the best way to handle these matters is to go to your supervisor and explain what's going on and let them decide the next course of action. In my case, I used to give every employee who worked for me two verbal warnings, and one written warning. If things did not improve or change, I then had the option to terminate the employee with plenty of backup in case their termination was challenged.

In this current economic downturn, with thousands losing their jobs every week, employees are doing whatever it takes to

show productivity and probably being very careful in how they are treating their fellow employees. This in itself may solve some of the issues in the work place. Otherwise, since you usually have to be at work for 40 hours a week, it's best to have a quiet and happy environment.

Do the best you can to accommodate your fellow workers, try to be a model employee, if you have an issue, don't let it fester, go to your supervisor and talk it out. Let them take some action. Your fellow workers will be grateful to have the work place a fun place to be.

So this ends my three part series on relationships. I hope you enjoyed the articles on friends, spouses, and co-workers. I know that some of you faithful readers were expecting my next foray to be about love. Well, it's a hot topic to be sure, (chuckle) and lord knows I've had my share (snicker), however, I read an editorial piece in the local daily that intrigued me, so I'm going to write about it and save love for the next issue after I do this one. I'm sure your all wondering what it's about? Well, you'll soon find out. Stay tuned and look for this article in the March 20 issue of Street Roots.

As always, if you have a comment, or want to chat, I'm at the corner of 12th and Couch, NW usually seven days a week from 8am until noon. The only exception is on Tuesdays. I volunteer at the Julia West house in the morning and am usually not on my corner until 11 a.m. Also, you can email me at: mignonne_thompson_john@yahoo.com.

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