

SMART WORKPLACES BY HR TO GO, INC - AUGUST 2004

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Don't Let an Incompetent Co-Worker Get You Fired

Jerry in accounts receivable is terminally slow in sending out invoices to customers, which is jeopardizing your ability to meet your department's numbers this quarter. Jerry doesn't report to you, and he's in an entirely different department, so you have no direct control over his work. You've tried asking Jerry nicely, threatening him, going to his supervisor, etc., but to no avail.

Having tried and failed at altering Jerry's behavior, your strategy now becomes positioning yourself against blame when your department doesn't reach its numbers. Here's how:

Start now. Don't wait until it's time to submit your quarterly report to address this issue. Write down everything you've done so far to try to get Jerry to invoice on time. Note the dates you've talked with him, the occasions you met with Jerry's supervisor and the outcomes.

Keep your boss in the loop. Once you've noted the steps you've already tried, meet with your boss, and let him or her know that your numbers will probably take a hit this quarter because of Jerry's performance. Share the ways you've tried to work through the issue already. *Note:* The boss may choose to step in here to battle with Jerry and/or his supervisor. Don't let him... just yet. Offer to go back to Jerry one more time. That way, it doesn't look like you're dumping your problem in the boss's lap.

Find strength in numbers. Chances are, your department isn't the only one that Jerry is hampering by invoicing late. Check with other department leaders to see how accounts receivable influences their numbers. If others are affected, you'll be in a better position when your numbers fall short.

Final note: This strategy assumes that you can't go around Jerry and have someone else bill customers on time. If you can circumvent Jerry, by all means, do it.



Five Sure Fire Ways to Quiet an Overly Chatty Colleague

Kathy is a great co-worker with one big fault: She talks so much about her personal life that it keeps you from completing your work on time. The result: You have to work late tonight, all because Kathy bent your ear for 35 minutes about her dog's flea problem. By the time you got back down to work, you'd blown a good chunk of peak-productivity time.

You've tried avoiding Kathy, but she always finds you. Your challenge: how to deflect Kathy's stories without jeopardizing your work relationship.

- 1. Resist the urge to reciprocate** when Kathy asks, "How are you?" or the ultimate time waster, "How was your weekend?" Answer her in as few words as possible. Then be quiet! Don't ask, "How are you?" or "How was yours?" That only gives her the opening she needs to pull up a chair and trot out the family pictures.
- 2. Close your door** when you need to concentrate. That will prevent her from popping in when you're too busy to talk. Tell your staff to call your extension when they need to talk to you. But don't tell Kathy that!
- 3. Stand up** when she enters your office to chat. Grab your coffee cup or a pile of papers, as if you were on your way out of the office. If she doesn't take the hint, spell it out: "I was just on my way to grab another cup of coffee. Can we talk over lunch?"
- 4. Remain standing** when you enter Kathy's office for any reason. Sitting down signals her that you're ready to spend some time with her... and makes it more difficult to excuse yourself once your business is complete.
- 5. Schedule "Kathy time."** Reserve 15 to 20 minutes a day to talk with Kathy, so she can unload her stories for the day. But talk with

her on your schedule, not hers.

Why You'll Want to Put a Clear Starting Date on All New Positions

Suppose an employee on disability leave gets wind of a promotion possibility in your company and applies for it - even though he'll still be out on the date the job is scheduled to start. One employee tried to do just that and then sued for discrimination when the employer turned him down. *Court ruling:* Employer wins the case. If you want to be eligible for the job, you have to be available to work it.

At least three key factors worked in the employer's favor:

- * The job had a clear starting date
- * The employer was able to show an immediate need to fill the job, and
- * The employee refused to make a commitment to return by the scheduled starting date for the job.

Under the circumstances, the court said the employer was under no obligation to hold the job open for the temporarily disabled employee. The ruling argues for listing a starting date for all open positions in your organization - even if it's "immediately." Otherwise, employees who are unavailable could demand that you hold the job open until they're good and ready to take it.



How to Create the Team No One Can Beat - advice from the coach of the Denver Broncos

Whatever the industry, its great leaders share basic qualities. In his book, *Think Like a Champion: Building Success One Victory at a Time*, Denver Broncos coach Mike Shanahan shares his insight into the principles of creating a winning team on, or in, any field.

Here is Shanahan's 15-point game plan for winning teams:

1. Teams matter more than individuals.
2. Every job is important.
3. Treat everyone with respect.
4. Share both victories and defeats.
5. Accept criticism.
6. Keep the boss well-informed.
7. Focus on your work ethic, not others'.
8. Allow for differences in lifestyle.
9. Be more creative than predictable.
10. Let go of failed ideas.
11. Employ structure and order.
12. Reward those who produce.
13. Find different ways to motivate.
14. Keep your employees fresh.
15. Protect your system.

Wrist Saver

Here's a quick way to relieve wrist pain and strain that can result from typing and other repetitive motions: Rest your elbow on a desk with your hand hanging over the edge. Stretch your fingers as far back as you can with your other hand and hold for five seconds. Repeat for the other hand. Try it!

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