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Take Action Against Rankism

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People are talking about the latest -ism that deserves serious discussion. According to Robert Fuller, who calls himself a dignitarian, rankism occurs when superiors behave badly towards other workers because they are at a lower rank.

Rankism seems like a close relative of harassment, poor leadership and communication skills. None of these problems are new to the workplace. What is new is a trend in small and medium sized businesses to address these behaviors and attitudes. More companies are discovering that happy, engaged employees can have a direct impact on their bottom line. In fact, revenues increase about 19% in companies where employees feel respected and are committed to their employer reports ROI on Employee engagement.

If you believe that every employee should be treated fairly and with dignity, then there are steps you can take to achieve that goal.

What you can do to fight Rankism?

A small group of people can bring about tremendous change. So whether you're a single employee or you run a small firm, you can take action to fight rankism and build a well-functioning workplace.

Employees

1. **Recognize that it is the right of every human being to be treated fairly** and with dignity and respect. Understanding and believing that fact will give you support and comfort as you work against rankism
2. **Label yourself as a person who deserves respect.** Often people brush aside negative comments or behaviors because they don't want to be labeled as petty or a complainer who others will not like. However, ignoring this only makes you feel more despair and less in control of your own life.
3. **Choose what to do next.** You have options. You can reaction angrily or be skillful. For instance, you can choose between making the other person aware of the impact of their behaviors; educating him or her about how to treat you in the future; or temporarily giving the person the benefit of the doubt.

Employers

1. **Recognize that you make have inadvertently created a rankist environment.** Think about how your company makes decisions and communicates. A conventional, hierarchical structure may cause some employees to believe they have more value than others.
2. **Explore the messages you send.** Do you tolerate someone who treats other

staffers poorly because he or she is a long time employee or you don't know what else to do? If so you may have unintentionally sent the message that outcome is critical and will be rewarded at all costs.

3. **Spend time and money to prepare employees** to successfully explore issues and find solutions. All of us learned how to fight, but how many people actually know how to do discuss disparate treatment without having it disintegrate into something ugly or awkward?

Stamping out rankism isn't an overnight task and these aren't the only keys to success. It takes courage for a company or individual to be 'self-reflective' and to purposefully act on its findings and flaws. The efforts will be worth it when every person- from the top to bottom- feels happy and knows he or she is making a valued contribution.

Dina Beach Lynch, Esq. is an Ombuds and Conflict Coach who launched WorkWellTogether.com, an online toolkit dedicated to help employees and managers resolve issues while preserving important relationships. Her work is featured in the August, 2006 issue of Entrepreneur magazine. Get your copy Special Report, "5 Tips to End Rankism for Employees", at <http://www.workwelltogether.com>



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This article has been viewed 23 time(s).
Article Submitted On: August 06, 2006