

The Workplace Psychopath

Australian research concluded that 26% of workplace bullying is conducted by 1% of the employee population, who are regarded as “corporate psychopaths.”¹

Are you working with a psychopath? Here are their key traits: -

1. Lack of Empathy

Unable to empathise. Their skills are used to exploit abuse and exert power.

2. Pathological Lying

Has no problem lying coolly and easily. Sometimes it looks like they cannot themselves distinguish facts and fiction.

3. Superficial Charm

Perfectly able to use superficial charm to confuse and convince their audience. Well trained verbally.

4. Extremely Manipulative and Cunning

Never recognise the rights of others and see their self-serving behaviours as permissible. They appear to be charming to strangers, yet are covertly hostile and domineering.

5. Grandiose Sense of Self

Feels entitled to certain things as “their legitimate rights”. Creates and maintains group polarisation, “us-versus-them” mentality.

6. Complete, Absolute Lack of Remorse, Shame or Guilt

Instead of friends, they have victims and accomplices who end up as victims. The end always justifies the means.

7. Shallow, Often Non-genuine Emotions

When they show what seems to be warmth, joy, love and compassion, it is more feigned than experienced and serves as an ulterior motive.

8. Dominating, Expect Unconditional Control

They are very harsh in testing it from their devotees and expect them to feel guilt for their failings.

9. Need for Stimulation

Corporate psychopaths are not necessarily living on the edge like regular criminals, yet they like testing subordinates’ reactions with bizarre rules, punishments and behaviours. Verbal outbursts are normal.

10. Poor Behavioural Controls/Impulsive Nature

Try to instil the belief that they are well connected. Demonstrate no sense of personal boundaries, no concern for their impact on others.

11. Failure to Accept Responsibility for One’s Own Actions

Irresponsibility/unreliability. Oblivious or indifferent to the devastation they cause. Does not accept blame themselves, but blame their followers or others outside their group.

12. Lack of Realistic Planning, Parasitic Lifestyle

Tends to live by present moment, attempt to steal and provide to superiors as own ideas the achievements of colleagues. Often make totally unrealistic business plans and objectives.²

1. Corporate Psychopaths, Bullying and Unfair Supervision in the Workplace Clive R. Boddy, Journal of Business Ethics, Volume 100, Number 3, 367-379, DOI: 10.1007/s10551-010-0689

2. http://www.townsvillebulletin.com.au/article/2010/02/25/117345_eyefeat.html citing Clinical psychologist and author of Working with Monsters, Dr John Clarke



Additional Signs from an Organisational Perspective

1. Usually the last people to discover the impact of the workplace psychopath are their more senior managers, because: -
 - a. They manage upward very convincingly.
 - b. They appear to produce results. Note that the positive results come in waves aligned with the arrival new team members.
 - c. If the people suffering the psychopath believe that person has a solid relationship with the next senior level of management, they are reluctant to complain. If the culture of the organisation is siloed, hierarchical, bureaucratic with a traditional culture, it is more difficult. The larger the organisation makes it even more difficult.
2. Subordinates leave or seek transfer, or become actively disengaged.
3. Peers avoid them.
4. Peers and subordinates cannot trust or respect them – they fear them – leading to anger and other stress forms.

The impact of these signs on the effectiveness and efficiency of the organisation is dramatic on the one hand and not usually measured on the other hand.

Recommendations

1. Call in an expert immediately, and ensure you are observing and recording, ensuring impartiality, to evidence the reality and assist the expert. Even if you feel you haven't captured sufficient evidence, still call in the expert.
2. Use the lists above to help you manage your impartial observations and records.
3. Factor in the time and resources you need to honour the observation and recording function, for the well being of the people and for the benefit of the organisation and its purpose.

Warning

1. There have been no credible recorded successes of a workplace psychopath being "cured".
2. Attempts to rehabilitate them lead to their acquisition of even more skills in serving their own purpose.
3. Call in the expert ASAP, and begin observing and recording impartially and thoroughly.
4. The statistics are that 1 in 100 males in the workforce are workplace psychopaths, and similarly 1 in 200 females.

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METATTUDE

We are a specialist team who assist the organisation to have the right people in the right places, willingly being at their best.

We help them become competent in dealing effectively with all their people ethically and lawfully by helping: –

- the organisation to realistically observe and record unacceptable behaviour;
- the committed engaged member to be sustainably effective;
- re-engage the actively or passively disengaged;
- the organisation ensure it is not unknowingly contributing to the problem;
- move on those who refuse to or can't re-engage, ethically, lawfully and timely;
- to ensure the replacement selection is the right fit, and has the right expertise to fulfil the role, and recoup the cost of hiring in the probationary period, earning the acceptance of their new team;
- the correct experience and expertise to be available to ensure the organisation and all the people, including the person/s in question, are protected and dealt with both ethically and lawfully.

Call David Deane-Spread on 0416117771 for a confidential obligation-free conversation