

New Survey Finds Four Out of Five Workers Believe Leadership Isn't Doing Enough To Combat Toxic Employees

Fierce, Inc. Survey highlights impact of toxic individuals on organizations; 88 percent say special skill or talent does not outweigh negativity

SEATTLE- June 15, 2015 – A clear disconnect is occurring at organizations across the U.S. when it comes to employee satisfaction, according to a new study released by Fierce, Inc., leadership development and training experts. The survey found that four out of five employees believe a toxic employee is extremely debilitating to team morale, while the same number agreed that their organizations are somewhat or extremely tolerant of these individuals.

The survey conducted this spring of over 500 employees aimed to re-examine the way employees and individuals handle toxic employees and the effects they have on organizations. Three years after Fierce initially conducted the toxic employee survey, forty-one percent of respondents still cite a negative attitude as the most detrimental trait an employee can have, trumping blaming others (11%), gossiping (10%), and laziness (6%), while thirty-two percent feel passive aggressiveness causes the most toxicity in an organization.

The impact a toxic employee can impart within a company is extreme, and for most, the negative outweighs the good; eighty-eight percent of employees believe a special talent or skill infrequently compensates for the negative impact of a toxic employee. While it is clear employees feel strongly that keeping negative employees around is in most cases not worth it, only forty percent of managers would fire a negative employee.

“There is a clear disconnect between an employee’s stance on toxic colleagues, and how they perceive their leadership is handling these troublesome individuals,” said Susan Scott, founder and CEO of Fierce, Inc. “Most of us spend a large percentage of our lives in the office, and our colleagues impact our lives significantly. When those individuals bring us down, it plays a huge role in how well we are able, and willing, to do our jobs. Organizations need to act quickly and efficiently when toxic employees rear their ugly heads, not only for the individuals affected, but for the overall health of the business.”

There are a number of reasons employees can become toxic, and it is important to get to the root cause of their negativity. Some possibilities can include:

- **Feeling undervalued.** Employees who feel disposable, commoditized or who don’t understand their role within an organization often hold on to negative energy. No one wants to feel undervalued in such an important aspect of their lives, which can show up in a foul mood.
- **Lack of recognition.** Asking for the best of someone and giving them nothing in return, except perhaps a paycheck, can be demeaning. If an employee feels they are not being recognized sufficiently, over time they are likely to become bitter, which can turn toxic quickly.
- **Interpersonal conflict.** The survey found that over half of employees argue with their co-workers at least once a month. Not resolving these conflicts, which are inevitable, can leave an employee with feelings of helplessness and futility.

Once the reason behind the toxicity is identified, Fierce recommends moving forward by communicating with everyone in the organization. Creating a culture of recognition is key to employees’ happiness,

which in turn will result in fewer toxic employees. If and when a toxic individual does appear, it is critical to confront the behavior head on, and if necessary, cut the cord.

“There are always going to be individuals who can’t move past their issues for one reason or another, or can’t get out of the victim mindset,” said Scott. “When this occurs, set your organization free and terminate the relationship. It may seem hard at first if their work is solid, however the havoc they are having on the organization as a whole isn’t worth an individual’s contribution in most cases.”

For more information on Fierce, Inc. this survey or more details on handling toxic employees, visit fierceinc.com.

About Fierce

Fierce, Inc. is an award-winning leadership development and training company that drives results for business and education by improving workplace communication. Fierce creates authentic, energizing, and rewarding connections with colleagues and customers through skillful conversations that lead to successful outcomes and measurable ROI. Tailored to any organization, Fierce principles and methods translate across the globe, ensure individual and collective success, and develop skills that are practical, easy-to-learn and can be applied immediately. Fierce’s programs have been successfully implemented at blue-chip companies, non-profits, and educational organizations worldwide, including Ernst & Young, Starbucks, Wal-Mart, Coca-Cola, CARE, and Crate & Barrel. Fierce has received numerous industry and business accolades. The company has been honored as an Inc. 500|5000 company five times, in 2011 was named to TrainingIndustry.com’s “Companies to Watch” list, and for the past four years was selected to Seattle Business magazine’s “100 Best Companies to Work For” in Washington lists.

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