

## **New Survey From Fierce, Inc. Finds Toxic Coworkers Increase Stress, Decrease Morale; Half of all Employees Choose to Ignore These Issues Instead of Addressing Head-On**

*In a survey of over a thousand full-time employees, just a quarter say they confront toxic employees directly; 40 percent believe their organization does nothing once made aware of toxic individuals*

**August 16, 2017 (SEATTLE, WA)** – A new study released today by leadership development and conversation experts at [Fierce, Inc.](#) finds that toxic employees continue to wreak havoc on the workplace. However, instead of confronting them, other employees do little to address them directly.

According to over a thousand full-time employees across the U.S., over half (53%) say they handle toxic employees by ignoring them, with less than a quarter (24%) confronting these individuals directly. While another 18 percent complain to management, 41 percent think that once alerted, management does nothing to address the situation.

“In a healthy work environment, any issue that affects the way you and your colleagues work should be addressed directly, and this includes toxic employees, as even just one can impact an organization immensely,” said Stacey Engle, executive vice president at Fierce, Inc. “These results clearly show a lack of action on behalf of employees, certainly due in part to an absence of conversation and confrontation skills. Company leaders need to ensure that all employees are empowered with the tools to address these toxic individuals in a productive and ultimately successful way.”

### **Defining a Toxic Employee**

A negative attitude is cited by the majority of respondents as both the most toxic and most detrimental trait an employee can have. When breaking down results into segments, the findings varied further:

- Of those currently unsatisfied in their jobs, laziness is cited above negative attitude as the most detrimental trait a co-worker can have.
- Millennials believe blaming others is a more detrimental trait than other age groups.
- 50% of company presidents believe a negative attitude is the most detrimental trait; just 35% of individual contributors believe the same.

Over half (54%) believe that between a negative peer, manager or company leader, all are equally detrimental to an organization.

### **Impact of Toxic Employees**

On a personal level, toxic employees first and foremost increase stress, according to those surveyed, followed by decreasing overall job satisfaction. For the organization as a whole, respondents believe a toxic employee decreases morale, followed by decreasing productivity, and decreasing the quality of work product. For women, toxic employees have a more detrimental effect, as 10 percent more women reported toxic employees increase their likelihood to leave a job than their male counterparts.

### **Handling Toxic Employees**

Based on these results it appears that most toxic employees are not being confronted, however, over two-thirds (69%) of those surveyed wish their organizations were less tolerant of these individuals. More than three-quarters (76%) say a special talent or skill never or infrequently outweighs the impact of a co-worker's negativity. This is down, however, from a 2015 Fierce survey where over 85 percent noted the same.

This does not translate into believing these employees should be fired, however. Just over a quarter (27%) believe an overly toxic employee should be fired, with the majority (67%) unsure, or note that it depends on the situation.

While the majority of respondents ignore toxic employees, this number increases for individual contributors. This group is also the least likely to confront (16%) these individuals. Higher roles within an organization see management as confronting employees more than individual contributors, perhaps due to a lack of change they see as a result. Higher levels are also more likely to believe an employee should be fired. Women are less likely to confront their toxic co-workers than men.

### **What now?**

Less than 1 in 5 surveyed believe a co-worker will change once confronted. Fierce experts believe, however, that the root cause of a lack of change is likely due to a widespread lack of confrontation skills across organizations.

"While addressing issues is key to any healthy relationship, there are effective and ineffective ways to go about it, with one creating positive results and the other having the potential to make things worse," continued Engle. "A successful confrontation will leave both parties feeling like the relationship has been enriched and issues have been resolved. Without the skills to confront, it's not surprising that employees don't feel like the tactic is successful, and in turn are less likely to try to improve the situation. This cycle can be the downfall of a good team, or even organization if not addressed."

For more information, visit [www.fierceinc.com](http://www.fierceinc.com)

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### **About Fierce**

Fierce Conversations is a training company that teaches you how to have effective conversations. Fierce has taught thousands to become expert conversationalists who save their organizations time and money by knowing what to talk about, how to talk about it, and why it matters for the bottom line. Fierce programs have been successfully implemented at bluechip companies, nonprofits, and educational organizations worldwide, including Amazon, Capital One, Wal-Mart, CHRISTUS Health, Coca-Cola, CARE, and Crate & Barrel. The company has been honored as an Inc. 500|5000 company six times, named to TrainingIndustry.com's "Companies to Watch" list twice, and has won numerous awards for top companies to work for in the state of Washington. Learn how to have conversations that matter at [fierceinc.com](http://fierceinc.com).