

# B u s i n e s s



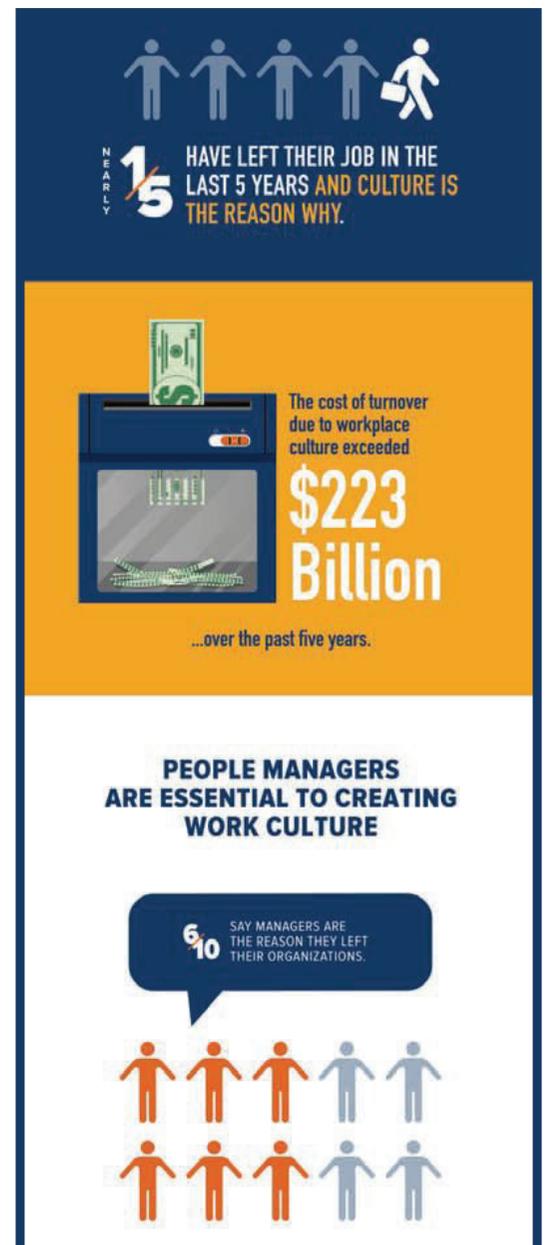
## STOP TOXIC LEADERSHIP FROM SPREADING A VIRUS IN YOUR COMPANY

Toxic workplaces often start at the top. Difficult, abrasive leaders may produce results, but their actions also lead to dysfunction and employee turnover. Organizations often overlook abrasive behavior or see it as a necessary means to an end, which sends employees the message that such behavior is acceptable and to be imitated. Then it's like a virus that continues to spread.

All too often, companies are overly results-oriented. Leaders tend to be preoccupied with what needs to be done and what key performance indicators to monitor, but rarely pay attention to whether employees are using acceptable behaviors to achieve those results. This focus on outcome over methods allows toxic behaviors to remain unchecked for years. Here are some ways businesses can encourage leaders to engage in healthy behavior and detoxify the culture:

- **Establish specific codes of conduct.** Correcting or preventing abusive behavior by leaders means first establishing a code of conduct as an essential part of the corporate culture. Communicate to all employees, including supervisors, managers and executives, that the organization will not tolerate bullying to any degree. Post these codes everywhere—in company manuals, in meeting rooms, on the website—and discuss them at kickoff meetings and conferences. The codes of conduct should explicitly state that employees who violate this principle will be disciplined and may be terminated.
- **Expand evaluations.** Leaders should be evaluated not only on what results they are achieving, but on how they are performing as overall leaders. Performance reviews should also consider the quality of interactions with employees. It's important that employees should have an opportunity to evaluate their manager's leadership in annual or semi-annual reviews.
- **Offer coaching and support.** If they are receptive, brilliant jerks should be offered the support of a customized coaching program to help them change destructive behaviors and leverage their strengths. They need to be shown how their outstanding abilities are being undermined by a lack of interpersonal skills. All too often, leaders think an authoritative, demonstrative style is largely responsible for their success, when it's often just as responsible for driving good people away.

Management needs to keep behavior principles in mind and reference them every day. Otherwise, the company's values and leadership principles are just talk, which risks creating cynics throughout the organization. *Dr. Katrina Burrus/ExcellentExecutiveCoaching.com*



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