



Detoxify your office

Remember, small gestures as well as big initiatives will offer the most effective course correction. These tips will get you started.

Constantly evaluate your company culture and try using the app Culture Amp.

Make positivity a target – managers should be measured on staff engagement.

Encourage staff to make decisions and hold them accountable for their results, but don't punish mistakes. **Embrace good ol' fashioned manners** – say hello, please and thank you.

Reward and recognise top behaviours.

Show empathy and respect – the more compassion you show, the more resilient your team will be.

Encourage constructive confrontation. Nip backstabbing in the bud by creating a safe place where people can share their views constructively and positively without fear of retribution.

CULTURE CLASH

WORKING WITH NEGATIVE, MANIPULATIVE, SELF-ABSORBED AND MISTAKENLY SUPERIOR TYPES HEAVY ON BITCHY, PITHY COMMENTARY? MAKE CHANGES, AND FAST, BECAUSE A TOXIC WORKPLACE COSTS NOT ONLY MILLIONS, BUT THE BEST EMPLOYEES.

A positive office atmosphere is about more than the odd after-work drinks. Those things are fun, don't get us wrong, but company culture is helping or hurting your bottom line more than most realise.

If an office is rife with gossip and negativity, it may lead to high staff turnover, increased absenteeism and loss of productivity. A Harvard Business School report even claims keeping on a 'toxic' employee can cost the average business more than \$20,000 per year – due to loss of co-workers who decide they can't tolerate the environment of negativity.

Yet positive cultures can have the opposite effect. The London School of Economics found measures taken to improve employee health and well-being improved productivity with an annual return on investment of more than nine to one per dollar invested. A strong workplace culture will increase innovation and

sales and lower staff absenteeism and turnover.

So, it's official – happiness is good for business. Just ask US online fashion store Zappos. Its CEO, Tony Hsieh, thinks it's so important he's created 10 core values:

1. Deliver wow through service.
2. Embrace and drive change.
3. Create fun and a little weirdness.
4. Be adventurous, creative and open-minded.
5. Pursue growth and learning.
6. Build open and honest relationships with communication.
7. Build a positive team and family spirit.
8. Do more with less.
9. Be passionate and determined.
10. Be humble.

Be humble, weird, adventurous and open-minded. Not bad for what is, realistically, a giant shoe seller. And since the company was sold to Amazon in 2009 for \$1.6bn, workplace culture has executives taking notice.

Still, positivity isn't something that can be bought with a Christmas bonus. A 2014 Gallup poll said staff respond better to general workplace wellbeing than material benefits, and the University of Pennsylvania found a 31 per cent increase in employee productivity when managers provided encouragement.

"Research in neuroplasticity and neurosciences shows people function at their most productive, most creative and make the best decisions when they feel psychologically safe," says Michelle Bihary, founder of training outfit Workplace Resilience Australia. And the best way to create that sense of safety? "Staff, employees and managers alike treating each other with kindness and respect."

So, before you install a workplace gym or ping-pong table, try investing in small things such as recognition and genuine thanks. Aside from creating an enjoyable workplace, it produces a ripple effect – like any other attitude, positivity is contagious.