

Preventing Solutions for Workplace Bullying

A recent report highlighted New Zealand has some of the highest rates of workplace bullying in the world, with nearly one in five employees being subjected to overbearing or belittling behaviour at work.

The research, funded by the Department of Labour and the Health Research Council, Study leader Tim Bentley, said levels of workplace stress and bullying were greater than expected.

Employers across all the surveyed sectors had a limited understanding of the problem and how to address it, the research found. It also found reporting structures were ineffective, with bullying being addressed as part of wider harassment or violence initiatives

A survey of 1728 workers in the health, education, travel and hospitality sectors found 18 percent had been bullied, while 75 percent had suffered workplace stress. Ineffective leadership was one of the main causes.

."There needs to be a zero-tolerance policy towards bullying and this requires a cultural change," Prof Bentley said.

The Department of Labour's Lesley Haines, said the research sounded a warning that employers should ensure procedures to deal with bullying were in place.

However, three professionals who work in the corporate market are now providing solutions for companies to deal with the issue.

Janice Davies from The Attitude Specialists who does business training was herself bullied at work. The bully had earlier had his students in tears and a previously tainted workplace reputation. After a five minute verbal attack her boss told her to discuss it at lunch and become friends with him.

Fortunately for Janice she had prior personal experiences with bullies and had learnt how to deal with them.

A workplace bully is angry and unable to communicate assertively. They have low self esteem and only have lose/lose relationships.

Over the past four years Janice has toured New Zealand with her workshops on Dealing with Difficult People and Tricky Situations. These also confirmed a high percentage of bullying was experienced in the workplace. It uncovered that after victims discussed the situations with their HR department or managers, they were often told to 'get on with it' or it was fobbed off as inconsequential. Generally they found another job leaving the bully for the next employee.

One employee was asked to monitor her bullying and over two weeks listed 75 encounters only to be told the bully, herself and the HR advisor would dissect each episode. After months of feeling sick and not sleeping she refused and left for a kinder work environment.

From the victims point of view bullies are cruel and gutless employees. Some may be aware of their antics others may not. The victim needs to learn if it wasn't them the bully would find another target. They prey on kind hearted and non assertive employees or gradually nitpick at confident employees until they lose their self confidence. They use manipulative language and behaviour.

Learning about prevention is defining the difference from that aspect and providing solutions for the victim and predator.

If you feel like you need help...your intuition is sending you a message. Listen up and seek help.