

Watch Your Mouth

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Just
Because
You *Can*
Say
Something
Doesn't
Mean You
Should.

Let's Stop
the
Gossip!

Defining Harmful Gossip

- ◇ Schadenfreude: taking pleasure in the misfortune of others
- ◇ Negative tone with the intent to decrease morale
- ◇ Excludes and isolates target
- ◇ Perpetuates conflict
- ◇ Unsubstantiated rumors
- ◇ Gut-check: you would be uncomfortable telling what you heard to the person being discussed



Rumors Rot Relationships

Some negative consequences of workplace gossip are:

- Erosion of trust and morale.
- Lost productivity and wasted time.
- Increased anxiety as rumors circulate without clear factual information.
- Divisiveness among employees as people take sides.
- Hurt feelings and reputations.
- Attrition when good employees leave because of an unhealthy work environment.

Stop. THINK. Think Again.

THINK:

- ◇ Is it TTrue?
- ◇ Is it HHelpful?
- ◇ Is it IImportant?
- ◇ Is it NNecessary?
- ◇ Is it KKind?
- ◇ Who does this benefit/hurt?

Repercussions:

- ◇ Safety
- ◇ Harassment
- ◇ Hostile Work Environment
- ◇ Undermine Authority or Morale

Pay Attention to Bad Actors

Simple Gossip...

- ◆ Per an Office Pulse study of 529 white-collar workers, on average, American workers spend 40 minutes per week gossiping, which adds up to around 33 hours (over 4 average work days) a year.[2]
- ◆ Remote work increases the likelihood that misinterpreted communication and bullying occur. Adam Doughman says, “Isolation and loneliness are also causing workers to act and react irrationally.’ The water-cooler chat, although it might seem like office gossip and unproductive, is quite important to people’s mental health.”[32]

...or Simple Sabotage?

- ◆ William Donovan, in his *Simple Sabotage: A Modern Field Manual*, recommended saboteurs “Spread disturbing rumors that sound like inside dope.”[1]
- ◆ Donovan also recommended to “be as irritable and quarrelsome as possible without getting yourself into trouble.”
- ◆ Corporate espionage uses many of the tactics outlined by Donovan to torpedo office efficiency, morale, and leadership. Question hostile takeover rumors if you notice saboteur behavior.

But the Good News...

Not all gossip is bad.

- ◆ Sharing information can build stronger teams.
- ◆ Some discussions are protected by law: The National Labor Relations Act of 1935 protects employee conversations regarding wages, for example.
- ◆ It can alert someone of an issue before it becomes actionable in order to prevent unnecessary escalation.

Let's Stop, Shall We?

Avoid Negative Gossip:

- ✓ Change the subject. Shift to a neutral topic like movies, books, or sports.
- ✓ Say something positive about the object of gossip.
- ✓ Walk away. Decline to be an audience member.
- ✓ Address the ringleader privately about the harm of negative gossip.
- ✓ Take it to your supervisor.



Citations

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