

# The Behavior We Tolerate

## A Leader's Tip Sheet for Handling Toxic but High-Performing Employees



An organization's culture is reflected in its staff's everyday behaviors. It's evident in employees' attitudes about their work, how well they collaborate, and how they interact with customers and other stakeholders. Consequently, culture has an enormous influence on a company's potential for success.

**But a company's culture will only be as good as the worst behavior its leader is willing to tolerate.**

Almost every company has at least one disruptive employee they've been struggling with forever. Their behavior is the opposite of everything the organization is trying to cultivate. Yet, these people often get away with poor conduct because they're top producers or have a valuable skill that leaders perceive as irreplaceable.



But no matter how much they contribute to the business, toxic employees negatively impact everyone around them and can even drive other high performers out the door. What's more, by allowing these disruptors to carry on unchecked, the CEO is signaling that their negative behavior is acceptable. Others may follow their lead, triggering a downward spiral in the company's culture. Why take the risk?

Here are some tips to protect and improve your culture and prevent high-performing, toxic staff members from holding your company hostage.



**Clearly articulate the behaviors that you want your staff to embody.** Don't assume that everyone will interpret company values the same way. Define them and describe what they look like at your organization.



**Use your prioritized behaviors as metrics for hiring the right staff.** Don't limit your criteria to qualifications, talents, or even appealing personalities. Be sure to select people whose views correlate with the culture you want to cultivate.

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**Create rituals within your company culture to practice the right behaviors.** When people are encouraged to routinely talk and think about the conduct you want to see, these preferred behaviors will eventually become habits for most people.



**Communicate these behavioral standards throughout the organization.** Use every opportunity to keep the behaviors you want to see top of mind for all staff. Weave them into all forms of communication.



**Teach and coach employees to reinforce the culture.** Schedule regular coaching sessions for all employees to give them feedback and tips. Talk about real-life situations at work and appropriate behavioral responses.



**Mentor problem employees.** Often a series of one-on-one sessions can significantly change a person's understanding of their behavior. Offer guidance and point out that their conduct is overshadowing their contributions.



**Lead by example.** Make sure everyone sees you living out the behaviors you expect to see in them. Be a visible standard-bearer that others want to emulate. Your example demonstrates how seriously you take the culture in your company.



**Anchor your culture with accountability.** Develop a systematic approach to hold people accountable for not only their performance but their behavior.

## The Ultimate Accountability

If you've done everything you can to help a toxic employee succeed in your workplace and they still don't conform to the culture you want to build, the best solution is to let them go. Being a top producer doesn't excuse intolerable behavior, and no one is so valuable that they ultimately can't be replaced.

In fact, when difficult people are fired, the team typically bands together and picks up any slack so that the organization can move on more successfully and smoothly than before. And getting rid of incurably toxic people sends a clear message to your organization. Anyone out of sync with the culture will understand that it's time to get on board—or leave.



To learn more about building a culture of accountability that will help your organization thrive, [book a call](#) with a CultureWise representative today.