

## Organizational Pooper Scooper

by Bob Whipple, MBA, CPLP

My wife saw a truck the other day with an advertisement on the side for an organization called "Doody Master." For a fee, they will come to your yard and scoop up all the little doggie muffins they can find. I suppose there are worse jobs, but really that is about the bottom (sorry, no pun intended there).

She suggested that many organizations need someone to scoop up all the *human* doody that people leave around the office for each other. How quaint! Human beings working in close proximity have a remarkable capacity for driving each other crazy. It happens in organizations of all sizes and types; there are few exceptions. When we do find an organization where people do not leave nasty little messes for their co-workers to step in, we will see a culture of trust and respect at the core.

The more I thought about it, I realized there are actually categories of doody, and if people would stop and think before taking action, they could usually prevent the need for an organizational pooper scooper. Here are some prevention ideas:

### **Assume best intent**

When something does not seem right, people have a tendency to assume something evil has prompted it. For example, if you get an e-mail from a coworker asking where you were yesterday, you might assume she was trying to scold you for missing an important meeting. You might drop some doody with a sarcastic note back stating, "I intentionally missed that meeting - it was a load of crap." After reading your reply, she calls to tell you that her inquiry was because she came to your office yesterday to deliver a late birthday gift, but you weren't there.

Assuming the best intent until all the facts are in would prevent many nasty messes from ever happening.

### **Forgive and forget**

Grudges can linger on for years in some circumstances. People who are angry with each other go out of their way to make life miserable for the other person. They

undermine the positive things and set the rival up for failure whenever possible. It becomes like a food fight of childish behaviors.

The antidote here is to remember that we are adults and try to act that way most of the time. Cut the other person some slack.

### **Don't be a Chicken Little**

We all probably know someone at work who goes around spreading gloom every single day. It is as if there is not enough pain and worry in the world, and this person is self appointed to correct the problem. Imagine the impact on your organization if you could wave a magic wand and have the most negative person in your group turn into someone who always looks on the bright side of life.

It really can happen, if the negative person is handled properly by leaders. I have written on how to accomplish this feat in my books. The technique is to "adopt" the negative person, find out what makes him or her tick, and begin to enroll this person as a positive force rather than a negative anchor. With time and commitment, most negative individuals can be turned into positive forces within the organization. It is not possible to save every negative person, but each one that can be turned around creates major improvements in the overall culture.

### **Turn "gotchas" into "thank yous"**

By creating a culture of respect and trust, we can reduce the human tendency to catch others doing wrong things and to rub their noses in it like when trying to train a puppy not to make a mess on the carpet. When people look out for the good in others, they learn to find the best parts, and things go a lot more smoothly after that. The Pygmalion Effect is more pervasive and stronger than we realize. When we seek to find the good in others, it is there in abundance. Unfortunately, if we are looking for dodo, we are sure to find plenty of that to step in as well. It is a matter of mindset.

The most powerful way to prevent interpersonal messes is to remember we are not Golden Retrievers. Instead, seek to use the Golden Rule every day, and see a greatly reduced need to clean up ugly messes at work.

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