



UNWANTED WORKPLACE EXPERIENCE

Introduction

To combat unwanted workplace experiences, some find ways to daily remind themselves that they are not a reflection of their current surroundings. But sometimes it's not enough to realize that you cannot control what other people say and do, but you can only control your own actions and reactions.

It's easy to justify personal negative behavior on the failures that exist in an organizations leadership. But at the end of the day, we all have an obligation to give an honest day's work without being subjected to personal negative behaviors that may contribute to unwanted workplace experiences

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Thinking Points

From July to October 2015, RAND, a nonprofit think tank, surveyed more than 3,000 people for its American Working Conditions Survey that was released August 2017. It found that almost 20 percent of U.S. workers are exposed to a hostile work environment.

“Nearly one in five American workers were subjected to some form of verbal abuse, unwanted sexual attention, threats, or humiliating behavior at work in the past month or to physical violence, bullying or harassment, or sexual harassment at work in the past 12 months,” according to the report. <https://www.marketplace.org/2017/08/16/business/one-five-us-workers-are-exposed-hostile-work-environment>

Define Unwanted Workplace Experience

DEOCS description: Unwanted Workplace Experience - measures the sexual harassment risk within the organization. The items contain behaviors associated with the increased probability that sexual harassment could be occurring.

www.deocs.net

DEOCS

The following items are used to assess Unwanted Workplace Experience on the DEOCS using a 7-point response scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

While under your current senior leader and within the last 12 months, did someone from your workplace:

- a. Repeatedly tell sexual jokes that made you uncomfortable, angry, or upset?*
- b. Embarrass, anger, or upset you by repeatedly suggesting that you do not act like a man/woman is supposed to? For example, if you are a male, being called a “fag” or “gay,” if you are a female, being called a “dyke” or “butch.”*
- c. Make repeated sexual comments about your appearance or body that made you uncomfortable angry or upset?*

The following items are used to assess Unwanted Workplace Experience on the DEOCS using a 7-point response scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree. (Cont.)

d. Make repeated attempts to establish an unwanted romantic or sexual relationship with you? These could range from repeatedly asking you out for coffee to asking you for sex or a “hook-up.”

e. Intentionally touch you in a sexual way when you did not want them to? This could include touching your genitals, breasts, buttocks, or touching you with their genitals anywhere on your body.

Favorable Indicators & Outcomes

FAVORABLE INDICATORS

- When these behaviors are not occurring:
 - Higher perceptions that all members are treated respectfully, fairly, and equitably
 - Men and women openly treat each other with dignity and respect



FAVORABLE OUTCOMES

- Evidence of positive and effective working relationships between men and women
- Demonstrated and expressed respect for individuals across sexual lines
- Increased trust and respect for each other
- High performing teams and high individual and team commitment and motivation to excel

Unfavorable Indicators & Outcomes

UNFAVORABLE INDICATORS

- A culture that tolerates demeaning jokes, stereotypes, and the use of language that has sexual undertones
- Microaggressions allowed towards individuals based on their sex
- Individuals are not corrected when they abuse their power or authority to engage in inappropriate conversations or physical contact
- Leaders do not establish their position against behaviors that could result in harmful outcomes



UNFAVORABLE OUTCOMES

- Culture of low morale
- Impaired relationships among unit members
- Lack of trust in the organization's leaders
- Undermined commitment to the organization and its mission

Strategies

Provide clear and continuous communication that sexist behavior in any form will not be tolerated.

Explain what a sexual joke, a sexual comment, or an unwanted sexual advance looks like; and the effects it can have on a person, a team, and an organization. Help people understand the problem and its seriousness.

1. Schedule frequent discussions allowing your members to express their concerns.
2. Encourage members to immediately address all inappropriate behaviors either directly or indirectly to the offender.
3. Acknowledge those individuals who speak up and intervene to eliminate sexual jokes, comments, or advances. Make speaking up a positive action/behavior.
4. Emphasize (verbally and in written policies) that everyone will be treated with dignity and respect and any sexist behavior will not be tolerated.

Summary

Unwanted workplace experiences will not stop on its own. The strategies noted above are helpful, but ultimately, may not be sufficient. It is all of our responsibility to be part of the fight to stop, unwanted workplace experiences or workplace harassment. We cannot afford to be complacent bystanders and expect our workplace cultures to change on their own.