

7 tips to transforming a toxic workplace culture

 By [Anja van Beek](#)

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A toxic workplace can have a devastating impact on employees and organisations alike. It can cause high levels of stress, low morale, and high turnover rates.



Image source: stokkete – [123RF.com](#)

In extreme cases, it can even lead to legal action. For leaders, especially the HR leader who is often seen as the custodian for culture, managing a toxic workplace is a critical responsibility that requires a strategic approach.

The stats speak for themselves: Toxic workplace cultures are the [number one factor](#) causing workers to leave their jobs during the Great Resignation. In fact, toxic workplaces are 10 times more important than compensation in predicting turnover.

To add to this, a [Files/16-057_d45c0b4f-fa19-49de-8f1b-4b12fe054fea.pdf Harvard Business School study](#) found that 80% of team members have lost work-time worrying about a toxic coworker, 78% say their commitment to their job has declined because of toxic behaviour, and 66% say their performance has declined.

Here are some tips to help you navigate this challenging situation and create a positive, healthy work environment.

1. Identify the root causes of toxicity

Before you can address a toxic workplace, you need to understand what is causing the problem. Is it a single individual or is it a larger cultural issue? Is it related to workplace policies, or is it a result of conflicting personalities? Understanding the root cause of the toxicity will help you develop a targeted solution.

2. Establish clear communication channels

Communication is vital in managing a toxic workplace. Encourage employees to speak up about their concerns and listen to what they have to say. This can be done through regular check-ins, employee surveys, or suggestion boxes. Establishing clear communication channels helps build trust and fosters an open, transparent work environment.

3. Address toxic behaviour promptly and effectively

When toxic behaviour is identified, it is important to address it promptly and effectively. This may involve coaching, mentoring, or disciplinary action, depending on the severity of the situation. Be sure to document each instance of toxic behaviour and the steps taken to address it. Be mindful to look for patterns of behaviour and patterns of thinking when it comes to toxicity.



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4. Promote a positive workplace culture

A positive workplace culture can go a long way in preventing and mitigating toxic behaviour. Encourage teamwork, respect, and collaboration among team members. Foster a culture of recognition, where positive contributions are acknowledged and celebrated. Provide opportunities for professional development, holistic well-being and encourage work-life balance.

5. Encourage employees to seek support

Employees who are experiencing toxic behaviour may feel overwhelmed and alone. Encourage them to seek support from HR, or get advice from a third party, or the employee assistance programme, or other resources. Make sure they know that they are not alone and that there are resources available to help them.

6. Hold leaders accountable

Leaders play a crucial role in setting the tone for the workplace. Hold leaders accountable for fostering a positive, inclusive work environment. Encourage them to model the behaviours you want to see in the workplace, and hold them responsible for addressing toxic behaviour.

7. Continuously monitor and assess the situation

Managing a toxic workplace is an ongoing process. Continuously monitor the situation and assess the effectiveness of your efforts. Use regular check-ins and dipstick surveys with team members to gauge their perceptions of the work environment and make any necessary adjustments.



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But what if you are a team member experiencing a toxic workplace? Here's four things you can do:

1. Build a network of trusted colleagues

You are not alone. Find a few colleagues that understand your frustration and who can provide support and encouragement to one another. Make sure you vent with colleagues you trust and end with what action are you taking about this matter.

2. Speak up about the needed changes

It is essential to speak up about what is not working and the impact on your performance and well-being. Be factual when sharing your concerns and ask if your manager sees it differently. Be part of the solution and share what are your expectations and suggested changes. If your manager is not open to conversation, approach HR or another senior leader. As a reminder: sharing your intent of why you are speaking up, is the foundation for an effective conversation.

3. Remain professional

Continue to add value to your team and focus on important goals. Don't join in office gossip. Connect to your values and what you want to be known for. Focus on self-leadership and ensure your habits support your stress and anxiety management.

4. Plan your exit strategy

The best way to handle a toxic environment is to find a new job. If the work environment continues to negatively impact your well-being or family condition, it is best to move on. Proactively look for new opportunities and share your CV with your network, update your LinkedIn profile and formal job portals.

ABOUT ANJA VAN BEEK

Anja van Beek is an independent leadership consultant, talent strategist and coach.

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