

# 10 ways businesses can heal a toxic workplace

Preventing the development of toxicity in the workplace is paramount to a business's success. Still, even with the best preventive measures in place, toxicity can develop, and businesses of all sizes must have a system in place to heal it when it does.

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In this article, we'll talk about what constitutes a toxic workplace, as well as the red flags to look out for. You'll also discover a list of ways to heal a toxic workplace once it has developed.

Without further ado, let's jump right in.

## What is a toxic workplace?

A toxic work environment can be described as one where negative behaviour is baked into the company's culture. This type of behaviour can be antagonistic, bullying, gossipy or exclusion behaviour, etc. and leads to stressed employees, limited communication, and *blame* culture.

Anytime you see nasty attitudes, harmful or unethical actions, and personal conflicts, you're likely in a toxic work environment.

Many different factors contribute toward creating a toxic environment at work but there are some universal elements or red flags at the basis of most toxic workplaces. I've listed some of them below.

# Signs of a toxic workplace:

High employee turnover

Unproductive, demoralised employees

Regularly slipped deadlines

Poor spend management practises that lead to high rates of expense fraud

An active rumor mill

Employees who openly complain about the company

People having meetings *after* the meeting

Poor communication where different employees receive different messages

Fear-based leadership

Lots of instances of absenteeism or employees calling in sick

Wage gaps, favoritism, or discriminatory policies

Now that you know the different ways to recognise a toxic workplace, let's take a look at the steps you can take to fix it.

## How to heal a toxic workplace

Whenever toxic culture develops it is still possible to rebuild trust. All it takes is the right strategy and consistent focus, and you'll soon be able to gain traction in your efforts to be and do better.

In as much as there are various causes for toxic work environments, there is also a wide range of solutions leaders can implement to heal such situations.

One way is to baseline behaviours that will help you get the most impactful results with as little associated effort as possible (in other words, get your 80 for the 20). This is necessary in order to unwind whatever created the toxic workplace, to begin with, and reduce the likelihood of that type of situation developing again in the future.

Listed below are 10 things you should focus on to change toxic company culture.

# Use mediation to resolve conflicts

Non-intervention to correct issues that come up in the workplace can be just as detrimental to your business as the problem itself. *But*, rather than try to sort it out yourself, you can use mediation, instead.

Compared to more formal methods, mediation is a more effective approach to resolving any conflict in the workplace. The mediation process involves using a neutral third party to assist those concerned in reaching a mutually beneficial (and voluntary) resolution.

This is a productive way to get to the root of an issue and when parties share information, it can lead to a better understanding of the problems affecting the workplace. When used to deal with conflicts promptly, mediation can also be a great way for you to build trust between you and your employees, as well as improve team relationships.

Source

Mediation comes with a range of additional benefits, such as:

You can design your own solution

You get a greater degree of party control

Mediation helps to preserve relationships

The process offers mutually satisfactory results

Mediation is also a foundation for future problem-solving

Often it's advised to do mediation in person, but conflict and toxicity can develop between members of remote or hybrid teams. Additionally, it may be safer and easier to perform mediation without face-to-face contact.

For these reason, you might consider using website builders that integrate easily with video sharing and screen sharing software such as that offered by Movavi, email, and other tools your business uses to facilitate communication between team members. This way they can log-on to a safe workplace portal and easily connect to others in a safe and healthy way.

# Set methods of discipline

The next step in dealing with a toxic workplace is to put methods of discipline in place (e.g. probationary periods) for employees displaying recurring toxicity.

But first, you must make sure that *everyone* accepts accountability. This starts with executive leaders who should hold themselves fully accountable for whatever state the company culture and employee experience are currently in.

Beyond that, you also need to set methods of discipline to discourage recurring toxicity. These methods will differ depending on your particular company rules, but the important thing is to ensure that these discipline measures are adhered to consistently.

## Create new guidelines

Once you've created a system for instilling discipline in toxic offenders, it's a good idea to create new guidelines so every employee knows which type of behaviour is acceptable and which isn't.

*It isn't enough to simply promise employees that toxic behaviour won't be tolerated – you also need to have it in writing.*

You can revise your company guidelines, bylaws, employee manuals, and any other documentation that defines and specifies what constitutes a toxic work environment.

Also, you need to list all the steps for rectifying bad behaviour in the workplace. You might even set anti-harassment and anti-bullying policies and share this document with all employees so everyone is familiar with best practices for creating a healthy work environment for all.

# Maintain an open office

Another way to address toxic workplaces is to maintain an open office to allow employees to address any toxicity they observe.

Once you have your policies and checks and balances to help prevent toxic behaviour in your business, it's time to focus on making it as easy as possible for your employees to bring any issues to your attention.

This will allow you to be able to deal with potential problems *before* they become huge issues that negatively impact your bottom line.

Oftentimes, you'll find employees having meetings after the meeting where they spend a great deal of time and energy complaining and commiserating. This is not an environment that facilitates healing, and one way you can avoid it is by implementing the following tips:

Openly share information as opposed to hoarding it as a way to maintain power.

Also, keep an open mind and encourage employees to share their opinion. You can use *email apps* to automate this process.

If you want this strategy to work effectively, it means you also have to be transparent, honest, *and* vulnerable in your *interoffice communication*.

By setting such an example, you make it more likely that employees will feel comfortable speaking up rather than keeping things bottled inside which contributes to growing toxicity in the workplace.

# Address under performers immediately

Under performers are yet another cause of toxicity in the workplace and an impactful way to detox a corrosive workplace is to ensure that you address the under performers the instant you become aware of them.

Don't allow cancers to linger any longer than they have to. If you do, your high performers will become frustrated by watching the problem employees get away with clogging up the workplace, which will likely lead to a drop in your high achievers' own motivation, performance, and productivity.

In order to avoid this,

Make sure under performers understand exactly *where* they are falling short

Provide them with a short window to fix the problem

Move on from problem employees as warranted

You must also implement a spirit of accountability in your organisation so that everyone is held accountable for delivering what they are responsible for, as well as being a positive contributor to a strong company culture along the way.

## Offer adequate support

Offering support is yet another effective way to start the turnaround when facing a toxic work environment. Make sure you secure proper resources for all your biggest priorities. Your best workers shouldn't have to make do with less.

Sometimes employees feel that they are not set up to win or that they are not being given the necessary resources to succeed at what they've been asked to deliver. This often leads to high levels of frustration which sometimes results in those employees actually doing much less with what they currently have.

In such a case, it's up to you to step up and do your best to cater to their needs in order to ensure the best results for your business.

You can also offer support for overworked staff so workers don't feel the stress of heavy workloads due to circumstances such as company layoffs, other employees leaving, or simply unrealistic workflows.

When people are overworked, it breeds an atmosphere of stress whereby they are constantly depleted of energy and drained of their sense of achievement.

By providing additional resources and support for your staff, you make it easier for them to prioritise where to put their energies so they can maximise productivity.

## Get continual employee feedback

Most toxic workplaces bloom in silence and it's up to you to set up systems so you're aware of issues before they reach a crisis point.

There are many systems you can put into place so you are alerted to potential issues before they grow into something big. One way is by getting continual feedback from employees, whether via email surveys, suggestion boxes, social forums, work chat spaces, or any other channel.

A huge part of healing a toxic workplace comes down to being able to receive employee feedback *and* show that you're doing something with that feedback, otherwise people won't feel the need to share if they believe nothing will be done about their problems anyway.

For this strategy to be effective, make sure the feedback is in a continual loop. You might hear about things that irritate, annoy, or even confound you, but this is a good thing because it means that your employees feel like they can trust you.

You need to take their feedback seriously and show them that changes will take place from their suggestions.

Important Note: In addition to getting feedback from employees, you must also seek out feedback from peers and mentors so you can stay on track and excel in your role as a leader.

## Offer consistent training

In order to reduce the chances of toxic behaviour in your workplace, hold specific training programs with detailed practices designed to prevent all types of toxic behaviour.

When employees see that these programs are being created and followed, morale will begin to improve. All you need is a plan for continued education that you follow consistently in order to begin building trust again.

*Make sure management completes the same training as employees to show everyone that you're all working towards a less toxic work environment.*

Managers can attend additional training to help them identify toxic personalities in the workplace, as well as find ways to avoid hiring such individuals in the future. These training exercises can also be used to help managers learn how to handle any narcissists or gaslighters that are already on board.

Thalita Ferraz, the owner of fashion and beauty website [HerBones.com](https://herbones.com) explains, “The moment my business changed is when I asked all of my remote employees to complete an onboarding training to better help them perform their jobs. Each employee has a similar process that includes a video explaining our company culture and this alone has made a difference in moulding their understanding of our company goals.”

## Work on improving company culture

Toxic workplaces aren’t always just about toxic individuals who exhibit egregious behaviour. They also involve company cultures that have gone askew, as well as harmful or unproductive norms that slowly become “*just the way things are*” over time, taking down optimism, motivation, and camaraderie along the way.

There are steps you can take to keep your workplace culture from becoming tainted so your employees (and other leaders) don’t have to toil in toxicity.

Here are a couple of ways you can heal a toxic workplace by improving your company culture:

Push work down into the organisation: Most companies have a command-and-control culture where leaders dictate what to do and micromanage the way it’s done. This type of situation is not ideal for building a strong company culture, and it is certainly a perfect environment for breeding toxicity. A better option is to grant more autonomy to let people do what you hired them to do.

Replace callousness with care: When people feel undervalued or under-appreciated, company culture doesn’t stand a chance. A lot of toxic behaviour in organisations can be traced back to some of the employees feeling like no one cares for *or* about them. Leaders can make a great deal of cultural progress by taking a genuine interest in their employees, including their career development, personal growth, etc. Give recognition, praise, or rewards to make employees feel valued.

Create resources that actually engage: While a lot of businesses throw together a bunch of pages with rules, regulations, and all sorts of other information, they’re often super boring. Don’t just throw a big stack of papers at your team members and expect them to read it. Go the next step and use podcast hosting tools or online course platforms to create content that actually engages your team members.



# Permanently remove toxic elements

After all other methods of discipline have been exhausted, it's time to consider terminating employees who remain toxic.

*Swift removal of toxic elements is necessary in order to prevent any further divisiveness in the workplace.*

Once you've identified the unhealthy elements in your business that are resistant to change, take the necessary steps to remove them so you can bring functioning order back to your place.

Furthermore, this shows everyone that you take an active role in rectifying wrongs and creating a positive culture of enhanced trust and cooperation.

You probably won't be able to detoxify your workplace all by yourself, but taking the actions outlined in this article will go a long way toward repairing a toxic work culture.

All you need is a little hard work and consistency, and you'll be well on your way toward a stronger culture where everyone works together to build and maintain a healthy workplace environment.

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