

The Snowball Effect

10 'tiny' problems that grow and grow until your company is snowed under

Every company has staff issues, but some of these can be deadly to a company. They start out as petty annoyances, but if they go unchecked, they keep rolling along ... until you've got an avalanche on your hands.

These problems don't go away on their own. In our experience, they can do damage from the start, and they just get more difficult to handle over time. It leads to discord, lack of productivity, decreased profits, and a steady stream of customers walking out the door.

Here are 10 common staff problems that can easily pick up momentum and take your company downhill in a Snowball Effect:

1 "I can see the future ... right up to quitting time"

A clear vision with measurable outcomes is necessary so that productivity is not mistaken for progress, yet most workers have little idea (or interest) in what the company vision is.

A communications client described working for his company as being like a hamster on a wheel: busy busy busy, while sales kept falling short. We educated the staff on having a clear vision, and integrating longer timelines and overarching cohesion. This client now reaches targets regularly and has increased sales by 5 percent.

2 "I'm right, you're wrong"

Errors and oversights easily pile up when everyone is too busy holding grudges, treating each other with disdain, and arguing over who's right. Customers can sense this conflict, and they very sensibly do everything they can to avoid it — such as taking their business elsewhere. Resolving these conflicts can turn this around and restore an atmosphere of trust in a place where people enjoy their work.

One CEO had two employees who in another era would have been declaring pistols at dawn. They no longer spoke to each other, and they refused to cooperate or collaborate. We helped them address past issues, identify triggers, and learn how to “agree to disagree”. Not only do they work together now, they both serve as advisors for others in conflict.

3 Complainers, whiners and prima donnas

Individual staff members are not entitled to more care and feeding than an entire department. You know those people who always have a laundry list of problems and distress? They can suck the life out of everyone around them. Clients and coworkers feel like babysitters to these high-maintenance people, and this creates a dynamic that is not conducive to productivity or great customer service.

Clients often come to us with employees who create a domino effect of negativity. We work with these “pay attention to me” employees, and also help their colleagues learn to react differently to improve productivity and foster an enthusiastic team.

4 “I thought Bob was doing that”

Lack of clarity on responsibility and accountability can cause missed deadlines and increasingly dissatisfied clients, and can seriously hamper your reputation and bottom line — which is why underperformance and mistakes should never be rationalized away.

Although an appliance distributor had detailed job descriptions, individual roles remained unclear. We worked with them on responsibility and accountability and the impact these had on team success. Errors were reduced as they began to focus on getting their orders to 100 percent accuracy rather than pointing fingers at each other.

5 “Sure, I’m committed ... for 8 full hours a day!”

When team members are not fully committed, apathy reigns and objectives cannot be reached. Your competitor surpasses you. Good employees leave in droves. With commitment, team members love their work and pull together to do what it takes to achieve overall goals.

One manufacturing company we worked with was running at 80 percent capacity. We aligned individual commitment with team commitment to

guarantee buy-in on the end results. Today, this company is running at 95 percent capacity and is able to stay competitive.

6 “Come on, you know what I MEANT to say”

Communication is the key to teamwork, yet companies routinely allow poor, unprofessional and disrespectful interactions to occur.

This is evident to customers, who respond by whisking their wallets off to safety! With good communication, your teams become collaborative units that create a memorable and progressive company.

Many of our clients underestimate the impact and influence of non-verbal communication. We focus on body language and tone so that customer service is not just about words or a sale, but a positive interaction. This always results in repeat customers and positive referrals.

7 “I am NOT confused about my job . . . am I?”

The who, what, where and when questions are easy. It’s the “how” and “why” that often go unanswered, leaving behind plummeting productivity because no one is clear on purpose or enthused with buy-in. Employees need clarity on details as well as larger goals so that accurate and complete service becomes the benchmark.

A retail management client was getting the staff to complete tasks MOST of the time, but there was no consistency. Dedication and buy-in were missing because expectations were loose and hard to quantify. We helped them learn to manage time, tasks and people to build clarity with contribution and cohesiveness. They now have 97 percent task completion and 28 percent consistency improvement.

8 “Relax? I’m too tense!”

When there’s too much angst in the workplace, it makes it difficult to relax and focus. Productivity is replaced with constant stress and tension – everyone sees it, feels it, and tries to avoid it. This leads to customer dissatisfaction and strained allegiances. Call out and manage tension so that enthusiasm and productivity can return to the workplace.

It didn’t take long for us to see the problem when a health spa came to us for help. Just hanging around the place made us jittery. We helped them address the pervasive friction by identifying the underlying issues

and resolving communications problems using assertiveness training. Faith and trust were restored, policies were implemented to prevent recurrence, and this company now enjoys lower turnover, while repeat clientele has increased by 17 percent.

9 Process needs people plus participation

When teams do not function like well-oiled machines, companies and customers witness errors, omissions and missed deadlines.

Customers easily tire of excuses, blame and defensiveness when orders are late or incorrect. With clarity and understanding, employees will be able to take ownership and make better contributions to the team.

One real estate management company wanted motivational training to increase production. We declined, because the team was not functioning well, and instead focused on individual components, contributions and collaboration. Process and order needed to be clear and achievable. Now that this team asks questions, gets clarity and makes suggestions, motivation is higher than ever, and they consistently meet their targets.

10 “Do as I say, not as I do”

Fact: Employees don’t leave workplaces, they leave managers. Poor leadership permeates every team, level and department. The resulting frustration and anger hinders meeting targets and completion of tasks.

Our work with a manufacturing company focused on turning supervisors into good leaders. We taught them that power differences are a privilege, not a condition of work. They learned to connect with staff, lend support, and exude confidence. Now they enthusiastically lead their teams into new ideas and opportunities where productivity can soar.

If any of these problems sound all too familiar, it’s time to correct them before they snowball out of control. We specialize in reducing your frustration by getting your team communicating and collaborating for great productivity. Call us at 604-468-9094 for a complimentary Team Change Strategy Session where we can help you identify these problems and create solutions.





At Pam Paquet & Associates Corporate Consulting we work with companies who are fairly certain they have hired the right people, but are frustrated that those people are not coming together for great productivity. We identify the particular challenges facing your staff and workplace, and provide effective solutions for long-lasting results. For more information, visit us at www.thepossibilities.ca , or call 204-415-5858 to book your Team Change Strategy Session.