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Here's how you can handle 'irritating colleagues' at work to boost productivity and morale

People can only overcome the current stalemate by being nimble, creative, and adaptable to extraordinary circumstances.

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Throughout your working life, you are likely to work with someone you find irritating.

By Dr. Malini Saba

Like change is a prerequisite for evolution, disruption is a prerequisite for innovation. Humans are the foundation of agility, creativity, adaptability, and related concepts. People can only overcome the current stalemate by being nimble, creative, and adaptable to extraordinary circumstances.

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While this is the objective of the majority of companies in order to climb out of the COVID abyss, it goes without saying that such expected behaviours require organisations to create a conducive working environment that facilitates the development of those behaviours.

Throughout your working life, you are likely to work with someone you find irritating. Perhaps they ask too many questions, attempt to interact on a level that you find uncomfortably sensitive, or repeatedly make excuses or demands.

It is natural to be tempted to ignore someone who irritates you or to avoid them when they get on your nerves. However, this may not be the most effective approach. Based on their skill set and knowledge, the individuals you find most unpleasant may be the ideal candidates for a variety of tasks.

Too frequently, disagreeable people can sap your energy, reduce your productivity, and damage your morale and sense of managerial efficacy.

Here are seven strategies for dealing with irritable co-workers in order to boost your efficiency and morale:

1. Avoid gossiping:

Complaining to another coworker about a frustrating coworker might be an easy way to convey your feelings. Sadly, this kind of story dissemination can be controversial and disastrous. In addition, you may find that it backfires and you come across as the "bad person."

2. Evaluate the effects:

What frustrates us could be extremely subjective. Before deciding how to approach these challenges, you must therefore halt and assess them objectively. How significantly does your co-worker's behaviour affect you? Do other employees appear to be affected? Do you think you can handle it by yourself? Or, should you raise the matter with your manager? The intensity of your response should be proportional to the gravity of his behaviour. If someone continued to speak loudly on the phone, for instance, you could use earplugs or respectfully ask them to "keep it down." However, if you believe that their behaviour is hostile or detrimental, you will certainly need to speak with your manager or HR department.

3. Be polite and respectful!

When confronted with persistently unpleasant behaviour, it can be difficult to maintain emotional control, and "bottling things up" can frequently exacerbate the problem. However, keep in mind that the issue is the behaviour, not the individual. Your coworker is probably unaware of how their annoying behaviour affects you.

Maintain emotional control when communicating with them. Whenever possible, keep the conversation focused on work. Express your ideas, but avoid making personal statements, as doing so could upset them. For example, you could say, "Hey, I appreciate your musical expertise, but I have a deadline today and must submit my report." "Could you please lower the volume for a moment?"

4. Consider the root causes:

Consider your coworker innocent until proven otherwise. For instance, a crowded desk may signal that the individual is struggling to manage their work. Noisy phone calls could be the result of hearing loss. Additionally, inadequate training may contribute to poor asset management.

There is a chance that his behaviour is related to a factor you have not yet explored, such as cultural differences. If so, continue with extreme caution. You must avoid coming across as insensitive or discriminatory.

5. Be clear:

Engage in a conversation of substance with your coworker. Be forthright and honest with her about your emotions, but still polite, and listen to their response without passing judgment. Intelligent conversations are intended to facilitate communication while avoiding conflict and mistrust.

6. Seek assistance:

When a bad attitude goes from just being annoying to being severe, like when rudeness or bullying happen often, it becomes a problem for performance or discipline. You should defer to your manager or HR department in these situations.

7. Maintain a positive attitude:


Recognize that modifying your behaviour can improve your performance and teamwork. This will undoubtedly contribute to your reputation and career advancement.

(Dr. Malini Saba is a psychologist, self-made businesswoman, human and social rights activist, environmentalist, and founder and chairman of the Anannke foundation. Views expressed are personal)


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