



*Fight Club: Managing  
conflict and preventing  
bullying in your team*

Ian Thompson



# Why Bullying Occurs

- ▶ *Bullies are not punished & thrive*
- ▶ *Rules to stop it are either absent or too weak to be useful*
- ▶ *No one in the company has the will to stop it*
- ▶ *No one in the company/agency has the power to stop it*

*From the perspective of those being bullied this is seen as an employers failure to handle the situation properly.*



# Why Bullying Occurs

- ▶ *Executives/owners/senior managers are the bullies*
- ▶ *Bullies follow orders from the top*
- ▶ *The workplace culture rewards cutthroat behaviours*

*Reward theory explains most bullying. It brings positive outcomes for bullies. Observers of the work environment, which includes most employees who bother to pay attention, learn quickly that aggression pays in a bullying-prone workplace culture*



# Why Bullying Occurs

- ▶ *Co-workers stand idly by & fail to stop it*

*The multiple reasons why a bystander may not intervene, but simply put, co-workers fear for their own survival.*

*Bullied targets understand this on some level even when they suffer consequences from the inaction*



# Why Bullying Occurs

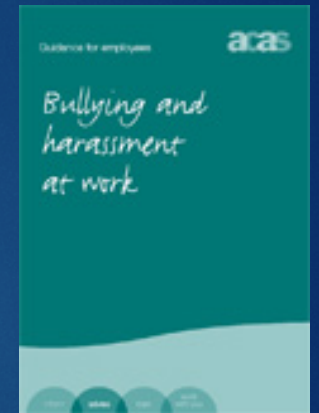
- ▶ *A few hyper-aggressive individuals have psychological & social problems*
- ▶ *Bullying is part of the larger society & culture*
- ▶ *Targeted workers somehow invite their fate*
- ▶ *We humans are aggressive by nature; it is inevitable*

*People and societal psychology leads to thinking like this. Once the thought has take hold psychologically it becomes a self fulfilling prophesy.*



# Strategies and Actions

- ▶ Download the ACAS guide to bullying and harassment
- ▶ As a company you need a clear policy on bullying and harassment including grievance procedures and disciplinary procedures
- ▶ There needs to be clear guidelines on how people report issues, with multiple points of contact, should one of them be the person being complained about
- ▶ If the allegations against an individual are serious they need to be suspended with pay
- ▶ An investigation must be completed





# Strategies and Actions

- ▶ All staff must be interviewed to ascertain what they do or do not know
- ▶ Remember this isn't a witch hunt you are after facts
- ▶ If the allegations are substantiated then disciplinary procedures need to take place
- ▶ If they are proven and the individual accused cannot give good reason for their behaviour then a final written warning or dismissal is the likely outcome



# What if?

- Its an allegation against the owner of the company

If this is the case there is a greater likelihood that the one complaining will lose their job or feel compelled to resign

However -

- ▶ A grievance letter detailing the allegations needs to be completed and the grievance process followed
- ▶ If there is no grievance procedure or it is ignored then the person needs to be made aware of external processes available i.e. mediation or tribunal



# What if?

- The allegations are proven to be untrue
  - ▶ Mediation needs to take place in order to bring about a mutually discussed resolution to the issues and clear up any misunderstanding.
  - ▶ Monitoring needs to be set up to ensure relationships improve



# What if?

- The allegations are malicious and untrue
- ▶ If you can clearly prove from multiple sources (people or evidence) that the allegations are malicious then the individual involved needs to be brought in for an investigation meeting and this may possibly lead to disciplinary action against them



# ACAS - Examples of bullying

- ▶ spreading malicious rumours, or insulting someone by word or behaviour (particularly on the grounds of age, race, sex, disability, sexual orientation and religion or belief)
- ▶ copying memos that are critical about someone to others who do not need to know
- ▶ ridiculing or demeaning someone - picking on them or setting them up to fail
- ▶ exclusion or victimisation
- ▶ unfair treatment
- ▶ overbearing supervision or other misuse of power or position
- ▶ unwelcome sexual advances - touching, standing too close, the display of offensive materials, asking for sexual favours, making decisions on the basis of sexual advances being accepted or rejected
- ▶ making threats or comments about job security without foundation
- ▶ deliberately undermining a competent worker by overloading and constant criticism
- ▶ preventing individuals progressing by intentionally blocking promotion or training opportunities.