



HELP! MY BOSS IS SUCKING MY SOUL DRY

Theft in the workplace commonly involves a taking of property, time, or information which rightfully belongs to the employer; however, an expanded view might include the taking of creative energies or productivity from talented employees or the destruction of their engagement or intentional sabotage of their work product. Theft of employee abilities and competencies by inadequate leadership has a direct causal impact on productivity and profits.

Waste, fraud, and abuse of the employer's property might include each employee's engagement in work activity in fulfillment of the mission and goals of the enterprise. A Gallup poll in 2010 revealed that 72% of the US workers are disengaged and simply come to work because they have to. In the US it is estimated about \$370 billion are lost due to poor productivity, waste, duplication of efforts, lack of inventiveness, or other insidious means caused by disengagement. If this enormous amount of time, effort, energy, creativity, loyalty, and interest, all essential elements for success, are missing or reduced, can this loss or diminished individual investment be considered theft from the employer? Effective leadership is an important element to employee engagement and satisfaction.

If the culture of the workplace encourages or, at the least, does not address the basic emotional need of feelings of belonging, the theft of disengagement may fall upon the manager whose responsibility it is to provide guidance, feedback, and recognition. An enlightened workplace recognizes its people, communicates in a respectful fashion, and encourages trust. Stressed, overworked, or unhappy people cannot be creative or productive. Knowledge workers need to know their role and purpose in contribution to the success of the organization. Theft by poor management should be a measurement of lost profits or productivity.

Researchers at the University of Akron and Michigan State University developed the Workplace Arrogance Scale (WARS) to identify arrogant tendencies and mitigate them and the resulting problems in the workplace. Arrogant bosses often cause employee turnover and bring about a negative overall work atmosphere. This can occur when arrogant managers attempt to prove superiority and competence, such as:

- Placing a personal agenda ahead of the company's agenda
- Demonstrating different behaviors with subordinates and supervisors
- A pattern of discrediting others' ideas to make them look bad (bullying)
- Recurrent rejection of constructive feedback (bullying)
- Exaggeration of personal superiority to make others feel inferior.

Merely because one has the power to make others feel inferior, embarrassed, humiliated, or demeaned does not mean this form of theft of motivation and engagement should be tolerated. It is counter-productive to use intimidation or bullying techniques on anyone, and especially those on whom leadership relies on to get the job done. Stealing energy from co-workers is a type of workplace theft that drains resources and adversely impacts the organization.

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