
----- WHAT'S UP, DOC? -----

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"Creating Leadership Solutions for Profit and Growth"

THIS MONTH'S THEME: NEGATIVITY AT WORK

SUBSCRIPTIONS INCREASE SINCE JAN 1, 2005: 42%

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THIS MONTH'S QUOTES:

"Courage is doing what you're afraid to do. There can be no courage unless you're scared." -- Eddie Rickenbacker

"Character cannot be developed in ease and quiet. Only through experience of trial and suffering can the soul be strengthened, ambition inspired, and success achieved." -- Helen Keller

"Everyone is a prisoner of his own experiences. No one can eliminate prejudices - just recognize them." -- Edward R. Murrow

1. NEGATIVITY AT WORK

1. NEGATIVITY SPREADS LIKE A VIRUS

During flu season, viruses spread with great efficiency. As infected people cough, they put viruses into the air in aerosol form, so others can breath it. If they cover their mouths before sneezing, then the things they touch, like doorknobs, for example, become temporary viral transfer stations. Negativity in the office is like that. It touches

everyone around. When your system encounters a virus, your immune response kicks in, burning metabolic energy. Sometimes the virus takes hold and you get sick, but even if you don't, your system is affected. Negativity affects you the same way. An environment filled with habitual negativity will wear you down and infect your mind, your emotions, your thinking and your spirit. That kind of negativity is the enemy of productivity, of mental health, of relationships, and ultimately of physical health. The mind and body are linked in ways we can demonstrate through science but not yet fully explain.

2. YOU CAN BE A CARRIER OR AN ANTIBODY

When a virus hits you, there's nothing for you to do about it, consciously. Your immune system kicks in to defend you. However, faced with negativity, you have a choice. You can wallow in it, let it seep into you, participate in or contribute to a negative conversation. Or you can get out of it. You can even choose to add positivity to the conversation, by adding another perspective, perhaps even through the use of some humor. You most likely can't "disinfect" the negative person, but you can protect yourself, and you can even add some positivity into the environment. Positivity is an antibody here. So, when confronted with negativity, particularly of the destructive kind, you can be an antibody or a carrier.

3. MAKE NECESSARY CRITICISMS DIRECTLY

Some negativity, in the form of constructive criticism or problem identification, is good. There is no point in ignoring problems with happy talk designed to deny reality. But when conversations about problems don't lead to the taking of responsibility to create solutions, then the negativity is destructive. When negativity takes the form of character assassination of an absent coworker, that's destructive. When anyone vents and spews criticism of a third party, yet lacks the courage to discuss any problems one-on-one with the source of any disagreements, that's destructive. If you have a disagreement with anybody in the office, rather than vent to someone else, spreading your negativity around, why not deal directly with the person giving you problems, confidentially? If you don't know what to say, then do some research on how to be assertive in a healthy, productive way. Have you ever noticed the way some people always have complaints about others, while other people seem able to set boundaries and get along fine, even with difficult people? The second type of person knows how to be assertive without being destructive. You can learn to do that, too.

4. LEADERS SET THE TONE

Leaders set the tone of any group. If a group is persistently negative, then the group leader is at least partly to blame for allowing this to

continue. In some cases, the leader may need to learn, to change behavior. In other cases, the negativity will only diminish when those determined to be unyieldingly negative are gone. If leaders fail to address a negative environment, then employees can step up to improve the tone on their own, and probably should, for their own well being. But that does not take negative or neglectful leaders off the hook. Employers should first look in the mirror when they discover that an environment has become plagued by negativity.

5. CHOOSE TO SHAPE YOUR ENVIRONMENT

Just to amplify the point, as an employee, you don't have to wait for a clueless boss to turn around a negative environment. If you are fed up with persistent negativity around you, then you can find some others who feel the way you do. Wave lunch. Hang out. Refuse to get drawn into destructive office dramas. Build for yourselves a little social firewall. Carriers of negativity tend to create an environment that isolates the otherwise productive, so first, refuse to be isolated. Carriers of negativity also crave an audience. So, get together with a few people and refuse to be an audience. That step alone begins to stem the spread of negativity. If you want, you and your more balanced friends can take conscious actions to confront or otherwise turn the tide on negativity. You can act together to solve communication problems or nagging operational issues. You can't change the personalities of one or two people who thrive on misery and drama, but you can work together to change the tone of your environment.

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6. ABANDON HOPELESSLY NEGATIVE ENVIRONMENTS

If the steps outlined above don't work, why not get out? I know, it's not always easy for people to find alternative jobs that meet all their needs, but it's also true that many people allow themselves to get into a rut. Pervasive negativity can reinforce that rut. Nothing ventured, nothing gained. If you are not happy with the environment around you, you can always get out of it. Some places are so messed up that good people absolutely should leave. Why prop up a messed up operation that just knocks people down? It can't be a very productive place over the long haul. It should be abandoned and left to die. Get out if you must. Life is too short.

7. TOLERANCE FOR DISHONESTY BREEDS NEGATIVITY

I've never seen a positive environment where lying was rampant. People are more positive and productive when they can trust each other. If your environment is negative, ask yourself if you contribute to this by your own lack of honesty. Leaders should also take note: if you let lying people slide, then your environment will become negative. It's your own fault. Naturally, if leaders lie and lack integrity, then don't be surprised when others do the same. They will. Bank on it. If you want to keep an environment positive, then at the very least, don't tolerate dishonesty.

2. RECOMMENDED BOOKS AND ENTERTAINMENT

FILM: Wallace and Gromit in "The Curse of the Were-Rabbit" in wide release

A great one for the kids and the grown ups, and the kids inside the grown ups. Wallace is a nutty inventor of indeterminate age. Gromit is his infinitely loyal, expressive and intelligent sidekick, who happens to be a mouthless dog. In the hands of stop-motion animator Nick Park, the combination becomes slapstick comedic gold. The first "Wallace and Gromit" feature film, after a series of award winning shorts, is fun for everyone. Spoil yourself: go see it. More reviews [here](#).

3. CHUCKLES

As a man was driving down the freeway, his car phone rang.

Answering, he heard his wife's voice urgently warning him, "Stephen, I just heard on the news that there's a car going the wrong way on Highway 401. Please be careful!"

"Darn," said Stephen, "It's not just one car. It's hundreds of them!"

4. PROMOTE YOUR OWN GROWTH

You don't have to live near the Schuler Solutions main office in Alexandria, Virginia to benefit from my coaching services. Great work can be done for your own growth and development over the phone and through document review via email. To find out more about your coaching options and available coaching plans, just click [here](#) now.

5. ABOUT DR. SCHULER

A. J. Schuler, Psy. D., an expert on leadership, negotiation and organizational change, provides consulting services, keynote presentations and seminars for client companies. His trademark is highly personalized service that leads to measurable increases in productivity, profit and growth. He also provides personalized leadership education and coaching for highly motivated clients.

Dr. Schuler, President of Schuler Solutions, Inc., has served diverse organizations in the private and public sectors, including The Ritz-Carlton Hotel Company, Sony Development, Nomura Securities and the Executive Office for Immigration Review.

A graduate of the Wharton School of Business, Dr. Schuler has successfully led the profitable growth of a dynamic, international consulting firm while serving as Operations Director, and has successfully coached over five hundred CEO's and corporate executives.

6. HOW TO SUBSCRIBE OR UNSUBSCRIBE

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7. NEWSLETTER STATEMENT OF ETHICS

NEWSLETTER ETHICS: This e-Newsletter will be sent to subscribers only upon REQUEST, though subscribers may forward this letter to anyone they wish. Subscriber identities or contact information will NOT BE DISCLOSED to any other persons or entities under any circumstances. (An attorney friend recently pointed out that, technically, I'd have to give up my list if compelled to do so by a court of law. He's technically right, of course, but let's face it: that won't happen!)

Have a great month. . .

A. J. Schuler, Psy. D.

Schuler Solutions, Inc.

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6300 Stevenson Avenue, Suite 916
Alexandria, VA 22304
Phone 703.370.6545 Fax 703.783.0232
AJ@SchulerSolutions.com
www.SchulerSolutions.com

"Make each day your masterpiece." -- John Wooden

P.S. - Remember to send in your comments and successes, and to forward this newsletter to at least one friend! Thanks . . . AJS