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RATING



ABOUT THE STAR RATINGS

Outstanding	★★★★★
Very good	★★★★☆
Good	★★★☆☆
Above average	★★★☆☆
Average	★★☆☆☆
Below average	★★☆☆☆
Poor	★☆☆☆☆

TRAINING MEDIA REVIEW provides objective reviews of training content and supporting technologies, advice on media-related training issues, research reports, and consulting.

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TMR REPRINT WORKING WITH YOU IS KILLING ME

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WORKING WITH YOU IS KILLING ME, DVD, CRM LEARNING (800-421-0833, www.crmlearning.com), \$995. Leader's Guide, Participant Workbooks (10 copies), Reminder Cards (10 copies), CD-ROM with PowerPoint slides and Optional Activity Handouts.

By Bill Ellet

What's the worst problem you experience on the job? Chances are it's a lousy boss or a co-worker who drives you crazy.

People are fallible. All of us bring some personal baggage to work, some more than others. Those with the heaviest bags can be trouble for the people they work with. The human cost is stress, distraction, and feelings of powerlessness. The stress can have health consequences, including heart attacks. For a case study of how persistent interpersonal problems at work can harm even young and otherwise healthy people, see this CNN story [<http://www.cnn.com/2007/HEALTH/conditions/10/11/ep.work.stress/index.html>]. From an economic point of view, all these points of friction are a hidden hit on productivity.

A COMPLETE PACKAGE

Working with You Is Killing Me, a program from CRM Learning based on the book by the same title, is hosted by the authors, Katherine Crowley and Kathi Elster. The structure of the program is fairly dense, though it isn't hard to follow. Crowley and Elster deliver much of the expert content and a voiceover narrator provides further guidance. The video follows three stories, each involving two or three actors. From time to time, concepts are listed on the screen. The settings for the stories are varied: office, factory, and hospital.

Besides the DVD, the program has a Leader's Guide, Participant Workbooks (10 copies), Reminder Cards (10 copies), and a CD-ROM with PowerPoint slides and Optional Activity Handouts. The training design is a two and a half to three-hour workshop, but it is modular and pieces can be dropped or compressed.

The program describes common types of troublesome behavior and roles that enable the behavior. Bad behavior has a synergistic relationship with the roles individuals play in the workplace, usually without being aware of it. *Working with You Is Killing Me* rightly emphasizes this synergy.

Crowley and Elster identify six types of problematic interpersonal behavior such as Boundary Buster, Empty Pit, and Saboteur. Enabling behavior falls into seven categories,

from Hero and Rebel to Martyr and Caretaker. The three stories of the video exemplify how people with some of these tendencies feed off each other.

1 + 1 = PROBLEM

The most vital point of *Working with You Is Killing Me* is the intimate connection between the two parties to a bad work relationship. Each contributes to an undesirable outcome.

The other vital point emerges from one of the steps of the framework: Unhook mentally. A person subjected to bad behavior needs to take a step back and analyze the situation as objectively as possible. To do this, the program suggests five questions:



- What's happening?
- What are the facts?
- What is the other person's part?
- What is my part?
- What are my options?

If answered honestly, these questions alone could make a significant difference in the workplace.

The analysis sets the stage for unhooking verbally—making statements to the other individual that begin to change the relationship. The Leader's Guide wisely suggests that the individual who is trying to unhook use "I" statements about the effects of the behavior, not "you" statements that can easily sound like accusations and trigger defensive behavior.

Working with You Is Killing Me is concerned mostly with bad peer-to-peer relationships. The Leader's Guide has a section on bosses who behave badly. Given the added complication of a power differential, I think the topic is important enough to warrant video treatment. The producer might even consider a separate program on bad bosses that uses the Crowley-Elster framework.

The two authors are comfortable on camera, and the stories and acting are engaging. Other aspects of the production are well done. The stories have happy endings, which can strike viewers as unrealistic, but training films need to show how success is possible. And in this video, viewers are told that the unwanted behavior may continue, requiring them to persist with unhooking.

The Leader's Guide is the key support, and it provides an excellent framework for learning.

RECOMMENDATION

Friction and conflict arising from bad behavior can have ruinous effects on morale, productivity, and even health. This is a tough problem because it consists of many individual interactions that may not be noticeable to anyone other than the participants. *Working with You Is Killing Me* equips people with pragmatic tools for dealing with the problem on their own, which is the only way it can be solved. The issue should be on most organization's list of essential training—and this program should be a leading choice.

Bill Ellet (wellet@tmreview.com) is editor of Training Media Review and a writing consultant at Harvard Business School. His book, The Case Study Handbook: How to Read, Discuss, and Write Persuasively about Cases, was published by Harvard Business School Press in 2007.

