



## Behavioral Impact in the Workplace

I couldn't believe the lack of awareness the passenger in the seat in front displayed during our flight over the Pacific Ocean. The airline industry now offers passengers tablets to rent, which are downloaded with several options for movies. Of course they come with earpieces as to not interrupt or annoy the other passengers.

Apparently, the traveler sitting right in front of me and my wife on this 6-hour flight had rented a comedy. It must have been hilarious (at least it was to her) as she, loudly, with convulsing cackles, laughed her way through the entire movie. Her laughter was violent, as her seat rocked back and forth with each heave.

I initially felt that I didn't want to be a killjoy and say anything, because I wanted to be happy that she was happy. But that wore off quickly.

As my wife and I were poking one another and rolling our eyes I remember thinking, "This person has no idea or cognitive awareness of the impact she is having on all of the other people around her."

This is not a whole lot different than our workplace experience. On a personal note, have you ever stopped to consider the impact your professional behavior or how you carry out your daily responsibilities impacts those you work with?

If your workplace experience is all about you, then I'm sure this newsletter doesn't even sound interesting or make sense. But as professionals, we must be connected to the cause and effect that our actions have on those we work closest to.



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### Domino Effect

In every office, unless you are independent or a one-man band, you must agree or at least consider the possibility that everything you do, good or bad, has a domino effect on others. Maybe you can relate to a few examples:

- Bonnie assigns herself to the patients, clients, or customers she wants to see (the lower maintenance ones), which leaves the difficult ones for her other co-workers to deal with.
- James has a problem of not documenting his reports properly so others have to take time away from their workload to go over his mistakes.
- Every year Carlos seems to take his vacation time when it is prime time, limiting others for those dates.
- Bill has a tendency to impulsively send out a correspondence without considering the time it takes for his assistant, who is already maxed with work he has impulsively given her.
- Yolanda can't seem to remember to clean her utensils when she's done eating lunch. She figures someone else will do it "as they always have."
- Every time we have the weekly staff meeting, Tim and Monica, the office extroverts, dominate the discussion and don't leave any room or air for others to jump in. Consequently, other brilliant ideas are missed and another staff meeting is chalked up to a waste of time.

I think my point is clear. Our negative or unaware behavior can suck the morale out of the room, and we can miss it altogether. On the other hand, if our clueless co-workers above were more aware of their one-dimensional behavior, and considered their staff first, there would be a stronger sense of teamwork and morale.

### Three Views to How Your Behavior is Perceived

There are more dimensions to what we do at work than we think. There is a lot more going on around us than our project at hand. Consider at least three facets of perceptions:

1. How we perceive our own workplace behavior.
2. How others perceive our behavior and work ethic.
3. How we think others perceive our behavior and the workload we accomplish.

### The Survey Project

I was working with a clinic that had previously taken two surveys with fascinating results. The first survey was for the employee to answer questions in terms of how they viewed their own behavior, skill set, and attitude at work.

In the next survey, they were to answer the questions as it related to their entire staff as a team.

What do you think the results read? In the individual survey, each and every employee graded themselves quite high—around **4.8 out of 5**.

In the second survey when they graded the team as a whole (you guessed it), the score was lower—from **3.9 – 4.2 out of 5**.

Of course this suggests that the way we view ourselves and our behavior is much more limited than how others feel about the work that we do down at the office.

My whole point with this article is that, as professionals, we must cultivate the courtesy and awareness of how our work ethic and behavior benefits or causes stress for others.

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### Polishing Behaviors for Better Outcomes

Have you ever gotten feedback about something you needed to change about your behavioral style in the workplace? I was recently working with a group of physicians and one of the doctors who had been known for speaking in blunt, bullet form style said, “Through the 35 years of my practice, I have finally learned that it is better to say things right (kind) the first time than have to go back and apologize later!”

What about you? Has anyone professionally pointed out a workplace behavior that needed correcting or at least needed a good polishing?

I was teaching on the subject matter of “Professionalism and Perceptions in the Workplace” just the other day, and mentioned that one of the ways we can get a more crisp awareness of our work impact is by soliciting feedback from others. So when the evaluation forms regarding the quality of the event were handed in, I noticed a comment from a friend of mine that was rather surprising.

He stated that my training needed “polishing” and that he could tell it was the first time I had presented that particular topic. Although it stung at first, I started pondering his eval and came up with the conclusion that when professionals give up three hours to leave their

busy jobs and responsibilities to attend a workshop and have a less than satisfactory presentation, it is unacceptable. You see, that particular time my project lacked in fluidity and impact was telling. I have just asked him to mark up all of the notes and give recommendations as to how I can polish it more professionally.

### Conclusion

What about you? Is there an area you can polish up so that your behavioral impact, work ethic, and professional responsibilities leave a daily impact for the better?

Take a survey, have a candid round table discussion with your co-workers, ask your supervisor to come completely clean with you on how you can polish up your responsibilities.

By the way, no one on the flight that day ever spoke to the unaware and irritating passenger, so guess what? The cheerful explosions continued, very few slept, and the flight seemed really long!

Interested in more information? Visit the workshops page at [teamworks-works.com](http://teamworks-works.com), or contact me at 541-621-5402 or [bill@teamworks-works.com](mailto:bill@teamworks-works.com).



Bill Gallagher has been counseling and working with professionals since 1980. His emphasis in the workplace is to help develop both relational skills and professional standards among administration and staff. He has worked in multiple organizational settings and of recent has spent most of his time addressing workplace issues in healthcare and city government.

Bill formed TeamWorks in 2001 to help organizations achieve their goals for establishing high morale and client satisfaction. TeamWorks currently specializes in offering one-on-one surveys and evaluations for management and staff to assess the current culture's needs and recommended trainings going forward.

In addition to conducting a variety of workshops and in-services on workplace issues, Bill mediates conflict among partnerships and staff relationships, speaks at conventions, facilitates management retreats, and offers personal consultation and counseling for staff.

Bill's strengths are in public speaking, mediation, and understanding the complexities of relational dynamics in the workplace. He lives in Medford, Oregon, with his wife Jenny, and enjoys spending time with their five children and five granddaughters.