

MDS Alert

Staffing Tips: Combat Your Co-workers' Chronic Negativity

Here's what you can do to help your team's unconstructive members develop a more positive attitude.

Accommodating the occasional bad mood can do wonders to help avoid conflict and maintain team harmony. But how do you work productively with someone who seems constantly overcome by a cloud of negativity in everything she says or does--in other words, a "negaholic"?

According to **Cherie Carter-Scott**, a human resources consultant and author of *The Corporate Negaholic: How to Deal Successfully with Negative Colleagues, Managers and Corporations*, having just one negaholic teammate can "slime the entire group by de-motivating, demoralizing and de-inspiring." To help turn around your co-worker's negative attitude, Carter-Scott suggests that you:

Get to know the person. Strike up a conversation before a meeting begins, for example. Include him in your conversations with other co-workers. "This is the type of person who has always been left out in the past or was the last one chosen when teams were picked for a football or basketball game when he was young," she explains.

"Make him feel [like] part of the team." Knowing that he is being noticed may cause your negaholic peer to think twice before raining on the team parade.

Be compassionate. "It's painful to be a negaholic. [Your co-worker] may be using negativism to mask other problems," states Carter-Scott. Position yourself as a supportive resource.

Ask for help. Once you feel you have made a "connection" or established some rapport, present the individual with the situation--framed as though it is your problem, not his.

About 95 percent of negaholics turn around their negative behaviors when these steps are taken, Carter-Scott claims. "But if you do nothing, the situation will only get worse."