



TenStep Supplemental Paper

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Lying in the Workplace

Honesty is the best policy

Key Learnings:

- Honesty cannot be ignored at workplace. It affects the reputation of the employees and the organization.
- Lying and hiding things impacts productivity and credibility

When you speak, do people listen? You don't have to be a "somebody" to command attention and respect in the workplace. But you do have to be credible.

Simply put, do people believe what you say? Is your reputation based on a track record of telling the truth? Are your estimates accurate and your words trustworthy? Or are you just a storyteller or a yarn spinner?

Organizations are essentially a collection of relationships. There is nothing more destructive to relationships than lying. Lying is one of the most expensive things in life and there are no long-term rewards.

The most obvious and neglected key to improved relationships and self-awareness is the concept of openness/honesty. Business success depends on telling the truth. Once we make truth-speaking a way of life, our relationships flourish. Speaking the truth is probably the single most cost-effective and simplest way to make major leaps in productivity and worker satisfaction.

It helps resolve and avert personal and interpersonal conflicts. So from where does this lying start?

Starts with a résumé

From the moment you submit a résumé, the credibility counter is activated. Are your assertions accurate, your chronology factual and your affiliations, degrees and awards correct? You run a great risk if you are anything but truthful.

A case in study

A senior manager of a firm was often seen carrying loads of pens, notebooks and other stationery materials on the sly from the supply room. A colleague reported this strange behavior to his boss. He called for the manager's personal file and checked his records. Everything seemed fine, his references and background seemed good and genuine. Suddenly it dawned on the man that he seemed over-qualified for the job! (He had an MBA and had applied for the post of personal assistant). This put the senior officer in doubt about his employee. He called him and confronted him about it. The employee confessed that he had not completed his MBA. He had clearly lied on his résumé.

Ultimately you can lose your job or damage your career by misrepresenting your accomplishments.



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In many job situations you have the opportunity to be known as a person of his word. Conversely, you can become known for shading the truth or for telling people what they want to hear.

Incidents of workplace dishonesty often appear even before an individual joins, or attempts to join, an organization.

Value of Own Words

Beyond misrepresenting your own accomplishments or capabilities, be cautious of assertions made about others. Character assassination can be fatal to your career, not just the person you're badmouthing. Whether or not you're a manager, your words carry weight that affects others.

Gossiping about others or spreading falsehoods or even half-truths can flag you as dangerous, untrustworthy and ultimately not promotion material. All of us know of the story of the boy who cried wolf. The same can be true in the workplace. Whether you cry racism, sexism or favoritism, credibility is important.

One of the keys to success in the workplace is to earn trust from your co-workers. If you gossip or betray confidences, you destroy your own credibility. Every time you give a deadline, do what you say you'll do, or at least be there in a time of need for others. This enhances your credibility.

Tell it like it is

Often employees fail to admit mistakes. Everyone makes mistakes; an honest person can accept them and correct them. People who try to cover up or ignore their follies often have a low-credibility factor. Ultimately, it's important to realize your mistake and see to it that it won't happen again, not to hide it or lie about it.

You don't have to tell people what they want to hear. Everything in life would be easy if we could say yes to every request. But, it's absolutely fine to say no to something you can't do. You should have the courage to say no when it's the right answer, even though it may not be the popular one. Over the long term, you will be respected for your honesty and correct decisions.

If you find it difficult to work on a project, it is always better to tell your boss in the initial stages. Don't wait for him to point out that you are not doing well. This would not only degrade you in front of your boss but affect your performance also. Facing facts is better than being confronted by failure or ignominy.

If we respect a person, we are likely to be honest with them. This will, over time, evolve into mutual trust. Unfortunately, the relationship works in reverse, too. We feel less obligated to be honest with people we don't respect.

The question though is what does a business get out of truth/honesty/respect stuff? It makes a company more efficient in its day-to-day operations but also allows changes in structure, direction or pace to be made with less resistance.



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People in the workplace must understand that even a small hint of dishonest behavior can damage their reputation and ability to succeed on the job.

An individual that "steals" company time by surfing the Internet during working hours or uses company equipment and supplies for personal use is as guilty of theft as the individual who takes cash directly out of the company's till.

Working can be a lot of fun; in fact, working is a lot of fun. Honesty is thus a precious commodity at work. When employers choose to be honest then teamwork and productivity will both improve.