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eSource



Battling Complacency

What is Complacency?

Complacency is defined as self-satisfaction especially when accompanied by unawareness of actual dangers or deficiencies or an instance of unusually unaware or uninformed self-satisfaction.

People who are complacent can appear to be on auto-pilot because they just don't have a lot of excitement or motivation to go above and beyond. This can happen in any aspect of life. It's usually easier to spot in others than in yourself. Knowing the signs might help you recognize it quicker.

Workplace Complacency

One common place that complacency occurs is within the workplace. Complacent employees can impact the entire team, so it's important to be able to spot it and resolve any open issues.

The US Bureau of Labor Statistics have data on people born in the later years of the Baby Boom (1957-1964) held an average of 11.3 jobs in the first three decades of their career, but half of those

Complacency is the
forerunner of mediocrity.
You can never work too hard
on attitudes, effort and
technique.

happened in the first six years after turning 18. This study shows us that people can take a few tries to find the job that is right for them. Being able to recognize complacency and have a game plan to address it is a tool that many managers could greatly benefit from. Getting ahead of these issues could greatly improve employee retention and productivity.

Problems Caused By Workplace Complacency

Let's do a deep dive into the problems this can cause, how to identify complacency in the workplace and how to work to fix and prevent it.

Obviously, employees that are functioning on auto-pilot isn't ideal for any work situation. The goal is to have a team that is engaged and consistently striving for improvement. Let's look at a few of the issues that complacent employees can cause.

Workplace Safety Complacency

Health and safety issues are number one. Every workplace has safety policies to help keep everyone safe while at work. Sometimes, when employees become complacent, they might skip some steps from their safety training and even if those steps seem small, they can cause big issues later. Each step in a process, especially in industries like manufacturing, is created with a purpose.

This issue is so important that there is an entire government bureau, OSHA, dedicated to workplace safety and health. Keeping your organization compliant to all the local guidelines and regulations is important for the safety of your employees and any visitors to your facilities.

Drags Down Overall Employee Morale

Complacency among employees can also drag down morale. Teams are only as strong as their weakest player. When teams are dealing with some of their team members just going through the motions, it can be contagious. Co-workers feed off each other's energy, so knowing anyone is feeling uninspired or disengaged isn't great. Ideally, you want a team full of fired up and excited people.

Loss of Productivity

If there are any steps missed in processes due to complacency, it could lead to losses in productivity. If crucial steps are missed, products or services may need to be redone for customers to ensure satisfaction. You never want to have to remake or reproduce anything because it's just a set back.

Best Ways to Battle Complacency in the Workplace

It's clear that no company wants complacent employees going unnoticed and unchecked, so what can you do about it? Here are a few ways to battle the complacency and reengage.



Share the Company Mission and Values

Amp up the excitement level about what the company is out to accomplish. Make sure that the mission statement and/or values is posted and a constant topic of conversation for teams. It helps to create some emotional ties between employees and the job they are completing each day.

Change Up Routines

Complacency can happen in situations where there are repetitive work and boredom. If you have lots of roles with repetitive tasks, get creative about how to switch things up. Invite the team to offer suggestions for automation of certain parts or ways to make the process better.

Get Back to the Basics

Over time, certain processes and procedures can take on more and more steps and take up more time. Schedule time to review the different processes within the organization every so often to make sure that nothing is redundant or unnecessary. It's important for employees to see that management has respect for their time. Asking for feedback on different parts of the business can help leadership get more information on what employees are facing. When there isn't enough proper communication, things can get muddled and hard to navigate.

Allow Yourself Time Away

The best way to help yourself avoid complacency is to take some time away. Utilize your vacation time and recharge your batteries. Allowing yourself some time away from work can help you reset and come back to work feeling energized and ready to take care of business.

The Bottom Line on Complacency in the Workplace

It's inevitable that this will occur in every workplace. Being able to address it right away can help you determine which employees need additional attention or are ready to move on.

Frequently Asked Questions About Complacency in the Workplace

What are some examples of complacency?

One example of complacency is a factory worker that is responsible for certain steps in the process taking some short cuts because they have years of experience and don't realize the importance of a certain tiny step – missing that can cause safety issues and product problems down the road.

Is complacent the same as lazy?

Complacency happens when people don't see a need to improve and reach their maximum potential, so they just go through the motions without putting much effort into their work. It's similar to laziness, but not exactly the same.

What's the best way to avoid complacency in the workplace?

Offer challenges to your team members to keep them motivated. Be honest about the feedback and the growth opportunities so everyone knows what they are working towards.

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An advertisement for Power Line Supply / USCCO. The background is a photograph of a power line tower under construction. Overlaid on the image are several logos and text elements. At the top left is the "POWER LINE SUPPLY" logo with a lightning bolt and the tagline "100% Utility / 100% of the Time". Below this is a list of services: 24/7 Emergency Response, Inventory Management and Barcoding, Project Materials Management and Logistics, Substation, Transmission and Distribution packages, Complete Tool Repair and Maintenance service, Rubber Goods Testing and Certification, and Technical Sales and Service. To the right of the list are contact details for three staff members: Mike Coomes (VP Southern Region, (317) 281-5561, mike_coomes@uscco.com), Mark Nuce (Account Manager, (317) 417-7325, mark_nuce@uscco.com), and Jerrod Devers (Account Manager, (317) 281-5904, jerrod_devers@uscco.com). At the bottom left is the "THE INDIAN WHEATLAND CO. BUILDERS OF POWER LINES SINCE 1924" logo. At the bottom center is the "HYDROLAKE INC." logo with a tree icon. At the bottom right is the "Crossroads" logo with a cross icon.

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INDIANA MUNICIPAL ELECTRIC ASSOCIATION

176 W. LOGAN ST. #225

NOBLESVILLE, IN. 46060

765.366.5506 | imeainfo@imea.com