Bullying and the Use and Abuse of Technologies

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Fundamental Belief

No one should leave work at the end of the day, less healthy than they were when they arrived ......

TUC Vision

Work of all forms should be health-enhancing ....

Negative Behaviours at work

- Negative behaviour: any behaviour that is disrespectful and undermines or violates the value and/or dignity of an individual; behaviour that harms individuals and organisations.

- Workplace incivility: rude, insensitive or disrespectful behaviour towards others in the workplace with clear intent to harm;

- Aggression: aggressive behaviour with the unambiguous, clear intent of causing harm to a person;

Negative Behaviour in the Workplace

Published research also still ongoing

- Rachael Pope, CSP and Stress Network
  - http://www.csp.org.uk/director/members/newsandanalysis/news.cfm?item_id=D5E19B7BEA35BEB9AFCAE8BFCF2DD611

TUC Safety Representative Surveys

Stress Listed	66%	56%	58%	61%	60%
Stress Factors	2000	2002	2004	2006	2008
Workload	74%	80%	79%	76%	73%
Staffing Cuts	53%	50%	49%	57%	58%
Change	44%	52%	47%	53%	50%
Long Hours	39%	41%	37%	34%	35%
Bullying	**30%**	**28%**	**27%**	**33%**	**40%**
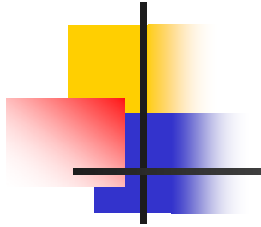
Technology as a Bullying Tool

Who's watching you?

Technology as a Bullying Tool

- 'In the Beginning, was the [spoken] Word'
- Communication was by a range of simple methods:-

- drums,
- smoke signals,
- manuscripts,
- mail including airmail

- *There was little or no urgency to reply*

- ***People were less stressed!***

Technology as a Bullying Tool

- Then there came to pass, Information Technology, Personal equipment, the Call Centre

- Fax, Email, Blackberry, Mobile phone and texting . . . . . .

- Computer use monitoring

- *And there was a great pressure on workers to respond* **NOW!**

Technology as a Bullying Tool

- Even when at home or on holiday
- During rest breaks and when asleep?
- And to respond to automated telephony systems

Technology as a Bullying Tool

Cyber Bullying

- Cyber-bullying can be as simple as sending emails to someone who has said they want no contact with the sender, and

- it may also include threats, sexual remarks, pejorative labels (i.e.hate speech), ganging up on victims by making them the subject of ridicule in forums, and

- posting false statements, and gossip as fact aimed at humiliation;

Technology as a Bullying Tool

Cyber Bullying

- when someone repeatedly makes fun of another person online or repeatedly picks on another person through emails or text messages, or uses online forums and postings online intended to harm, damage, humiliate or isolate another person that they don't like;

Technology as a Bullying Tool

Cyber Bullying

- when the Internet, cell phones, or other devices are used to send or post text or images intended to hurt or embarrass another person.

Technology as a Bullying Tool

- Work pressure cultures can lead to
  - Unreasonable expectations on all workers
  - Inappropriate demands and expectations because of technology availability
  - The spy in the cab, on the desk, in the PDA and the mobile
  - Inhumane behaviours by managers in technology-dependent trades e.g. call centres

Technology as a Bullying Tool

Different types of technology based abuse

- Texting, Emailing, Nuisance Calling, Interfering with set up, on line abuse and harassment
- Death Threats, Sexual innuendo and harassment, victimisation
- Exclusion of certain groups or individuals
- Remote access, anonymous access
- Work Control – monitoring of key strokes, speed of responses to calls
- Safety Monitoring and tracking of employees out on road
- CCTV abuse
- Facebook and related sites – snooping, abuse of privacy

Bullying Behaviours

Effects

- All the usual symptoms of stress and associated illnesses
- Recurrence of 'minor' ailments triggered by low immune systems
- [Deep] Psychological trauma
- Destruction of self confidence and self-esteem
- Long term sickness absence and knock on effects and costs
- Breakdown in personal relationships (Home and Away)
- Premature death and suicide

Technology as a Bullying Tool

- Advice to Victims
    - Where you can, stand up to the bully – seek support/witnesses
    - Challenge bullying and harassment at all levels
    - Seek help – do not hide away
    - Take action with Union advice and help
    - Gain strength and confidence by saying NO!
    - Be Strong, be Positive and above all behave with Dignity to show up others' appalling behaviour for what it is
    - Union Reps be vigilant with Management

Technology as a Bullying Tool

Workplace responses
- Individual challenges
- Collective Actions
- Strong effective and enforced policies and procedures
  - Anti Bullying Policy
  - IT and Technology Policy and protocols
- Manager Training and effectiveness
- Disciplinary action taken against bullies
- Effective Grievance and Mediation processes
- Serious and meaningful action taken from the top of the organisation.
- Trade Union vigilance

Anti-Bullying Culture

Top-down commitment to:-

- Zero Tolerance throughout the organisation
- Caring Supportive Culture
- Dignity at Work

The UK National Work-stress Network ● workstress.net

www.workstress.net