

## J. Michael Locke

### Musings

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#### #37: Don't Let Negative Employees Fester April 28, 2020

Organizations are like the human body with interconnecting parts working in harmony when in good health. Individuals are the cells and unfortunately a bad employee can be like a cancer. You cannot let negative employees fester! While you might think you are being nice, letting a problem employee remain in an organization is one of the worst things a leader can do as they usually “metastasize” and spread ill-will throughout an organization.

Problem employees often signal themselves early. Don't blow off immaterial things. Note who comes to the voluntary company events and who doesn't (ex. holiday party). Note who signs up to organize the company softball team compared to who is watching the clock and “punching out at 5.”

You have to nip it in the bud. At a company I worked with, we had “garbage gate” as one individual refused to take her collective turn emptying out the small company office trash can. WARNING! You have to address upfront directly and quickly. To ensure no confusion, do it in writing.

If you provide notice and it is not fixed in relatively quickly, call it a day. I have never heard an executive lament moving too fast on terminating an employee. I have innumerable times heard an executive lament moving too slowly. You also can't live in fear of a lawsuit. Do what you have to do in order to lead the organization. Don't abdicate the decision to HR.

Ideally, all of your employees should be “at will.” I would discourage you from entering into written agreements which provide for set severance etc. All these agreements do is make it more expensive to make a change. If everyone is “at will,” you can change your team much easier.

Good leaders can develop a talent but that is different than changing a negative employee. Don't have any Dennis Rodman's on your team.

Be safe.

Jml

#### *Second Thoughts*

I have mentioned the shift to telehealth a couple of times in these musings. NBC ran a story on it [here](#). Meanwhile, Peloton set a record Wednesday when more than 23,000 participated in a live workout.

I have previously shared my admiration for Mitch Daniels, the President of Purdue. Here he is “managing forward” regarding Fall classes on CNBC yesterday: [Mitch Daniels](#)