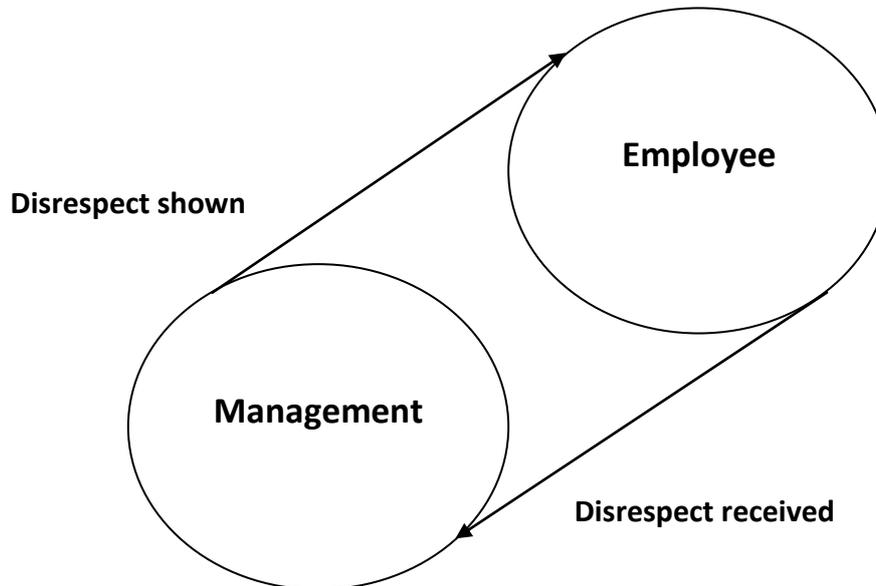




## DISRESPECTFUL EMPLOYEES

Having run my own businesses and now consulting to other organisations has led me to conclude that most managers and business owners are so absorbed in the fulfilment of their actual roles, responsibilities and the meeting of performance goals that the people they lead can easily come second place if they are not careful. Instead of viewing company growth as a team function much of management's focus tends to be individualistic, devoid of team effort. This then leads to employees feeling a lack of care, disrespected and in turn creates a disrespect loop as shown here.



What we sow we reap. The planting of disrespect by management reaps disrespectful employees. The manager demonstrates a lack of respect for the employee and in turn receives disrespect back.

### Disrespect Shown By Managers

Disrespect from management can be as simple as:

- Lack of acknowledgement for a job well done
- Not interested in the 'person' but simply treating the employee as a worker
- Saying they will get back to them but continually failing to do so
- Not providing ongoing critique and performance reviews
- Failing to show up at team meetings or continually cancelling them
- Failing to address advice from the employee on what could be done better

Most people like to feel they are part of something bigger than themselves. When our staff feel they are isolated individuals performing their tasks with no recognition or possibility of advancement, they can end up feeling used, resulting in disrespect.

One very skilled engineer I know personally went to her manager continually over a six month period requesting her be considered for career advancement within the company. Her manager consistently said he would get back to her but never did. She left the company. No respect by management resulted in disrespect by the worker. Another company I consulted to, the mid level manager would always ask her senior manager how his weekend went. He disliked this immensely and would not engage in any personal conversation. The mid level manager was told she was there *only* to work and not engage in small talk. He planted the seeds of disrespect resulting in massive conflict between the pair. He reaped what he planted (or didn't plant in this case).

Another major area that creates the feeling of disrespect within employees is that of managers not respecting differences. As people we tend to see that *different equals wrong* as opposed to *different equals different*. We tend to like people who are similar to us and discount the rest, leaving them to get on with their work with decreased support. Thus why some employees feel that the boss has favourites.

If we as leaders could see that different equals different and thus respect those differences within the people we lead, engagement levels would increase along with the resulting productivity. Here is a classic scenario we find in the workplace.

Life Areas	Gary – Vice President	Peter – General Manager
Values	Career and Money	Family
Skills	Organisation	Organisation
Gifts and Talents	Finance	Strategy
Wisdom	Makes sense of conflicting views	Understands people intuitively
History	No loss in his life	Loss of a previous wife to cancer and child to suicide
Behaviours	Dominant	Stable/Steady
Personality	Extrovert	Introvert
Self Image	High	Low
Beliefs	Everyone should work as hard as him	Results not time are what counts
Goals	Get to the top no matter how	Being a loving provider for his family
Motivations	Expansive public perception	The personal well being and engagement of his team
Interests and Passions	Work	Coaching his sons soccer team

You will notice the strong differences between the two people above. I have seen the case time and time again where someone like Gary will judge others like Peter for being slack in their work despite the fact that Peter may demonstrate high productivity. We tend to judge the surface of things as opposed to looking at actual results.

Tim Ferris in his book *The 4-Hour Work Week* speaks about his first job at an ice cream parlour where he was hired for eight hours a day but completed the job in one hour. He worked smart not hard. After three days he was fired with a parting comment from the boss saying that perhaps in the future he would understand the importance of hard work. This is the classic difference where one judges the other based on their own standards as opposed to seeing that different equals different and honouring the fact that the 'different' person may actually have some qualities that are worthwhile. The other issue here that companies would do well to emulate is the focus on outputs not inputs. Does it really matter if Peter is meeting or exceeding his performance criteria within the work day rather than staying till 7pm like Gary does every day?

### Disrespect Shown By Employees

In the case where employees are just plain disrespectful (no matter how much managers care) the best way to deal with these situations is directly.

#### *What Can I Do Better?*

Here is some language that might be useful:

*"I might be wrong but I get a sense from you that you don't like working here. The reason I say this is because I have noticed that , <provide your observations and evidence>. Is there anything I can do to make things better for you?"*

The key here is to get the employee talking. To side with them and to be humble enough to admit to your own shortcomings as manager. Often when an employee sees that their manager is willing to admit that they could be doing things better and will do what it takes to help the team member be happy and productive in their work the disrespect loop is broken.

#### *Where There Is No Change*

No matter how much we care as managers, some people will not change. These people can be toxic to the culture of an organisation and need to be removed if their attitudes are affecting other workers. I always suggest the obtaining of advice from legal sources to be completed prior to managing these out effectively.

### The Mirror Effect

In conclusion, management sets the example. Our workplace cultures are a direct reflection of management. If we see people as important, as a truly valuable asset to our business and treat them accordingly, then the culture will be one largely of respect and vitality. If on the other hand we see people purely as a necessity and that life would be better without them, they in turn will feel our perception and thus respond accordingly.

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