

gossip

casual or unconstrained conversation or reports about other people, typically involving details that are not confirmed as being true

Usually the topics of the MMS are positive traits that every employer wants to see in their employees. This week's focus is on a negative trait that is quite common, but **no** employer wants to see happening:

You show up on Monday morning and congregate around the coffee maker to share weekend stories. Before you know it, the conversation turns to what feels like a harmless little chitchat about your coworker's romantic relationship with your neighbor across the street. The more details you share, the more uncomfortable some of your colleagues become. Eye contact is averted by one, and another abruptly bails the scene with a "gotta go."

When Chitchat Becomes Gossip

Here's where it gets tricky and how you can tell the difference. When light conversation and idle chitchat elevates to negative, inflammatory and embarrassing to the person being spoken of, you've ventured into gossip terrain, which, in HR speak, is a form of attack and workplace violence!

If you're still not sure, take these illustrations for a test run:

- * Does the chitchat rejoice in the misfortune of others? Yep, gossip.
- * **Does it have a negative emotional charge or seem to perpetuate conflict or negativity? It's gossip.**
 - * Does it hurt or damage the one being spoken of? Would you say it in front of this person's face?
 - * Is it an unsubstantiated rumor about another employee's work situation (a promotion or demotion)?
Uh-huh, gossip.

What Gossip Does to the Workplace

You know who they are--most likely disgruntled workers who didn't get something their way, disagreed with a change of direction and are now holding grudges, or didn't get that promotion they felt entitled to.

They are quick to gossip, and even quicker to hammer leadership for "dumb decisions." Keep a close eye on them. They spread their tumor by enlisting others into their negative spin campaign.

Some negative consequences of workplace gossip include:

Gradual decline of trust and morale; unexpected loss of good talent who left due to the toxic work environment.

Work productivity goes down because people are emotionally caught up in the drama like teenagers. Watch for hush-hush chatter around cubicles of disgruntled employees where those infected by gossip will stop by to "get the latest," thus **wasting precious company time.**

Anxiety and tension are high as rumors circulate and people walk on eggshells without knowing what is and isn't fact.

Things every employee can do to nip gossip in the bud:

Set an example. Be a good role model for others to follow and don't engage in the gossip. Be assertive, walk away, or change the subject. The message you're communicating to others is the behavior won't be tolerated.

Ignore the gossip. Gossipmongers thrive on attention and will prey on open and inviting ears. Your course of action is to be busy and preoccupied with your work (as you should be), so you're not available to listen. When the gossipier hands off the juicy gossip baton to you (because they want to spread it by enlisting other gossipers), don't take it.

Keep your private life private. Unless you have absolute certainty that you can trust a coworker, the rule of thumb is plain and simple: Don't trust personal information with anyone at work that will be fodder for gossip. The dead giveaway that you're dealing with serial gossipers is this: If you find them gossiping about others, you can bet that they will be gossiping about you as well. Don't give them ammunition to do so.

Let the boss know. Have the courage to inform your immediate boss if the gossip is growing and gaining followers. Management that support a healthy work environment should now address the issue in a way that reinforces and promotes the a positive culture.



**CareGivers
of America**
Home Healthcare Services