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Sustainable Project Principles help with creating a bully-free workplace
Commentary
by Mónica González

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After reading the impressive research paper titled *Profit, Productivity & Peace – The Business Case for Eliminating Workplace Bullying* (Pelletier, 2016), I felt motivated to analyze workplace bulling with regards to the Sustainable Project Principles (GPM Global, 2016)

First of all, let me introduce some concepts:

Bullying is a systematic campaign of interpersonal destruction that jeopardizes your health, your career, the job you once loved. Bullying is a non-physical, non-homicidal form of violence and, because it is violence and abusive, emotional harm frequently results. And the **Workplace bullying** as "repeated, health-harming mistreatment, verbal abuse, or conduct which is threatening, humiliating, intimidating, or sabotage that interferes with work, or some combination of the three". (WBI - Workplace Bullying Institute)

According to Pinsky **"bullying behavior** was purposely employed in militaristic, male-dominated command and control workplace cultures and formed the foundational cultural model of many workplaces up until quite recently. Bullying is like bacteria. It needs the right environment in which to thrive. In business, that environment is a disrespectful workplace culture." (Pinsky, 2009, pág. 69)

Pelletier mentions in his research that workplace bullying includes behaviors that can be **categorized into three types,** as outlined below (the list of examples is not exhaustive).

Aggressive Communication:

- Insulting or making offensive remarks
- Shouting, yelling, angry outbursts
- Going around co-workers in order to avoid communicating with them
- Harsh finger pointing, invasion of personal space, shoving, blocking the way
- Sending angry emails or other e-communication

Manipulation of Work:

- Removing tasks imperative to job responsibilities
- Giving unmanageable workloads & impossible deadlines
- Arbitrarily changing tasks

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- Using employee evaluations to document supposed poor work quality and without setting goals or providing the tools needed to improve
- Withholding pertinent information needed to do one's job effectively
- Excessive micromanagement
- Failing to give credit, or stealing credit for others' work
- Preventing access to opportunities like promotions or raises

Sabotaging Work:

- Humiliating or ridiculing, excessive teasing
- Spreading rumors or gossip
- Ignoring peers when they walk by
- Playing harsh practical jokes
- Taunting with the use of social media
- Hinting that someone should quit, nobody likes them

The bulling targets: based on the research findings from studies and conversations carried out by WBI (Workplace Bullying Institute) with thousands of targets are:

- Independent - They refuse to be subservient. Bullies seek to enslave targets. When targets take steps to preserve their dignity, their right to be treated with respect, bullies escalate their campaigns of hatred and intimidation to wrest control of the target's work from the target.
- More technically skilled than their bullies - They are the "go-to" veteran workers to whom new employees turn for guidance. Insecure bosses and co-workers can't stand to share credit for the recognition of talent. Bully bosses steal credit from skilled targets.
- Better liked - They have more social skills, and quite likely possess greater emotional intelligence. They have empathy (even for their bullies). Colleagues, customers, and management (with exception to the bullies and their sponsors) appreciate the warmth that the targets bring to the workplace.
- Ethical and honest - Some targets are whistleblowers who expose fraudulent practices. Every whistleblower is bullied. Targets are not schemers or slimy con artists. They tend to be guileless. The most easily exploited targets are people with personalities founded on a prosocial orientation -- a desire to help, heal, teach, develop, nurture others.
- Non-confrontive. - They do not respond to aggression with aggression. (They are thus morally superior.) But the price paid for apparent submissiveness is that the bully can act with impunity (as long as the employer also does nothing).

Costs of Incivility (Christine Porath, 2013)**:** Many managers would say that incivility is wrong, but not all recognize that it has tangible costs. Targets of incivility often punish their

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offenders and the organization, although most hide or bury their feelings and don't necessarily think of their actions as revenge. Through a poll of 800 managers and employees in 17 industries, we learned just how people's reactions play out. Among workers who've been on the receiving end of incivility:

- 48% intentionally decreased their work effort.

- 47% intentionally decreased the time spent at work.

- 38% intentionally decreased the quality of their work.

- 80% lost work time worrying about the incident.

- 63% lost work time avoiding the offender.

- 66% said that their performance declined.

- 78% said that their commitment to the organization declined.

- 12% said that they left their job because of the uncivil treatment.

- 25% admitted to taking their frustration out on customers.

And the other side are the **Sustainable Project Principles** developed by GPM Global, which are characterized as: universal, apply to the area of focus, self-validating, proven in practice over many years, empowering, invoke confidence and ability to influence and shape how the initiative will be managed, provide a framework of good practice for those involved and Managing by principles revives human responsibility.

In order to be sustainable, portfolios, programs, and projects should adhere to the following six principles:

1. Commitment & Accountability - Recognize the essential rights of all to healthy, clean and safe environments, equal opportunity, fair remuneration, ethical procurement, and adherence to rule of law

2. Ethics & Decision Making- Support organizational ethics, decision making with respect for universal principles through identification, mitigation, and the prevention of adverse short and long-term impacts on society and the environment

3. Integrated & Transparent - Foster the interdependence of economic development, social integrity, and environmental protection in all aspects of governance, practice and reporting

4. Principles & Values Based- Conserve and enhancing our natural resource base by improving the ways in which we develop and use technologies and resources

5. Social & Ecological Equity- Assess human vulnerability in ecologically sensitive areas and centres of population through demographic dynamics

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6. Economic Prosperity- Adhere to fiscal strategies, objectives, and targets that balance the needs of stakeholders, including immediate needs and those of future generations

These principles for Sustainable Projects are derived from the UN Global Compact's Ten Principles, PRME, Earth Charter, and ISO 26000 Guidance on Corporate Social Responsibility.

In consequence, the full adoption and implementation of the tenets of Sustainable Project Principles will strength governance policies and procedures to create a paradigm shift in the strategic alignment of projects and organizational strategy, while also helping **to create a bully-free workplace.**

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About the Author

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Mónica González, MBA, PMP, GPM/GPM-m, is an Industrial Engineer, Master in Business Administration and holding three International Certifications: Project Management Professional (PMP®) from the Project Management Institute and Green Project Manager (GPM® and GPM-m®) from the Green Project Management Organization. She has over 25 years of experience in Electrical Companies, in both public and private sectors, specifically in Electric Power Transmission in High and Medium Voltage.

In the past 16 years, she has worked as a Project Manager, involved with developing, establishing, implementation and maintenance of Organizational (and Integrated) Management Systems according to the International Management Standards, like ISO 9001 (Quality Management Systems - Requirements), ISO 14001 (Environmental Management Systems -- Requirements), ISO 26000 (Guidance on Social Responsibility), OHSAS 18001 (Occupational Health and Safety Standard) and the Argentinean Resolution ENRE 057/2003 Public Safety for Electric Power Transmission in High and Medium Voltage.

From 2002 to 2004, she was part of Communication Committee and Environmental and Sustainable Development Committee of Electricité de France (EDF) Branch America along with colleagues from France, Brazil, Mexico and Argentina. As PMI member Monica is a founder of the PMI Nuevo Cuyo Argentina Chapter, as a volunteer (2008-2013), she has served as Marketing and Communications leader, issuing a monthly newsletter among others.

In addition to integrate the PMI Global Sustainability Community of Practice Council (May´2010-Dec´2012) and support PMI Educational Foundation as a Liaison in Nuevo Cuyo Chapter (2011-2013), she serves as a committee member for the PC/ISO 236 Project Committee: Project Management; and for the ISO/TC 258 – Technical Committee: Project, Program, Portfolio Management.

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From October 2012, Mónica is a member of the Green Project Management Executive Consortium. Currently, she is the Executive Director for GPM Latin America. Monica can be contacted at monica.gonzalez@greenprojectmanagement.org