

Administrative Assistant's

UPDATE



PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR CANADA'S OFFICE SUPPORT STAFF

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Myths about office bullying must be debunked

Myth 1. Bullying is usually just a personality difference

Often managers think that bullying is just a simple matter of personality conflict. In a 2000 survey of Canadian labour unions, 75 per cent reported incidences of harassment and bullying. Research shows that bullying is rampant in organizations across North America and should not be tolerated.

Myth 2. Bullying will stop if the bully is confronted

Some managers try to solve bullying by confronting the bully directly. Although many behaviours can be corrected in this way, in a situation of true bullying, this technique can do more harm than good. Often a bully will go *underground* and escalate the bullying campaign; this often takes the form of making the victim look incompetent.

Myth 3. The bully is an anomaly

Bullies are people, just like you and me,



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and like us, they have needs. But unlike most people, bullies do not know how to have their needs met. They use techniques, such as intimidation, threats and cruelty in an attempt to control their environment.

Myth 4. The Bully is a loner

A bully is rarely alone. They surround themselves with others who support them – often through fear. Bullies will gain power over their victims through physical strength, status within a group, the victim's weaknesses and support

from other employees. Author Barbara Coloroso, in her book *The Bully, the Bullied and the Bystander*, points out that the bystander is an important player in the situation, helping to maintain and enable the bullying.

Myth 5. Bullying can't happen between two employees

Bullying is about power. Power over others is critical to the survival of the bully. Although many bullies are bosses, employee-to-employee bullying is almost as common. Wherever there is a stronger person who wants to maintain control and there is a weaker, vulnerable person, there is a potential bullying situation.

Myth 6. A strong manager would be able to deal with a bully

Standard management techniques such as meeting with the bully individually and then meeting with the bully and the bullied together often fail. Many managers who suspect bullying do not understand it enough to know how to respond appropriately. In addition, the manager may be harbouring a vague fear of conflict, a specific fear of the bully or the fear of losing a valuable employee.

Myth 7. It's only a small problem in the scheme of things

Bullying costs organizations millions of dollars annually. Talented people leave, morale is low, and the work atmosphere becomes toxic. Tim Field, a British author who moderates *Bully OnLine* (www.bullyonline.org/work-bully/index.htm) believes that most organizations have one *serial bully*. Research shows that those who are bullied will not only lose interest in their work but sometimes will retaliate, resorting to aggressive behaviour. **AAU**

Professional associations

There are many admin associations, depending on the industry. (The two major Canadian ones are AAA and IAAP's Canadian district.)

Association of Administrative Assistants (AAA), www.aaa.ca

International Association of Administrative Professionals (IAAP),
www.iaap-hq.org

OTHER ADMIN ASSOCIATIONS

Ontario Medical Secretaries Association, www.omsa-hca.org

National Association of Executive Secretaries and Administrative Assistants (American), www.naesaa.com

Legal Secretaries International (American), www.legalsecretaries.org

National Association of Educational Office Professionals (American),
www.naeop.org

National Secretarial Association (American), <http://rentamark.com/nsa>

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