

Hi, everyone. This is Wayne Rivers at Performance Construction Advisors, where *We Build Better Contractors*.

This week I want to talk about overcoming negativity on teams. This comes from, I've mentioned the CEO newsletter that I get every day, really worth your while if you just Google it and subscribe. And this article came from fall of '23 by Anthony Ianiro. I think I've done some of his articles before, so a good writer worth paying attention to. And he had this great line in the beginning of his article, and he said negativity is the only cancer that spreads by contact. And I thought that was really perceptive. I tend to agree. It's gotten so ... I came up on Zig Ziglar and Dennis Waitley and all those people ages ago that taught the power of positive thinking, Norman Vincent Pele, all those people. And I loved it. I just ate it up with a spoon. I couldn't get enough of it.

And so now I'm resolutely positive 100% of the time. And when I'm around negative people, it almost makes my skin crawl. Now, you can't pick all your situations, but when I'm in a group of negative people and it's a sunny day, "Well, the rain is coming." The weather's wonderful. "Well, it's going to be winter again soon." When I'm around people like that, that turn, what is it? They find the dark lining in a silver cloud. Just, oh my gosh, it just drives me nuts. So, negativity is the only cancer that spreads by contact. I think that's true in organizations. Now, what about this that's important to you? Well, if you've got 25 or 250 or 2,500 employees that you work with on a regular basis, those negative people are pulling down your non-negative, better people. They really are.

Now, what are the sources of negativity in an organization? Well, number one, leadership. I think I told the story about meeting a guy who turns around country clubs, and I was so intimidated. This 100-year-old country club, it's got all these rich people on the board. And how do you go in there, where do you start? Do you start with the food and beverage? Finance? Where do you begin? And he said, "No. Oh, no. Every country club with problems, you go directly to the board. All problems in a country club can be traced directly to a dysfunctional board." If you've got toxic people, negative people in your organization, the first place you have to look is your leadership in that organization.

Second thing, unaddressed problems create negativity. He said in the article that unaddressed problems don't age well, and that's true. So, you've got your folks complaining regularly about this or that or whatever, and you just let it wash over you and you don't pay attention, you don't take any corrective action, that's going to create some negativity.

The third thing toxic employees will, of course, toxic people, you just can't get rid of them fast enough, in my opinion. But we'll come back to that. And then the fourth thing is ambiguity and uncertainty. So not knowing our direction, not knowing our strategy, not knowing where we're going to be in five years, not knowing what our intentions are, and not knowing what you're going to be when you grow up. That kind of ambiguity and uncertainty in a corporate setting just don't last very well.

Okay, what do you do? Okay, what do you do? You've got negativity in the leadership situation. What do you do? That's tough. That's tough, because it's really tough, if you think about it, for people in the organization. So, you've got a manager maybe two levels down, and that manager recognizes that, say I, my attitude is horrible for some reason, over a period of time. Really difficult for that person in the organization to come up to the boss and say, "Wayne, you're a real ..." something, "lately. What's going on?" That doesn't often happen.

So, one suggestion there is coaching, and of course my suggestion at all times is peers. Because peers don't owe you a thing. They can look you in the eye and they can say, "Wayne, I'm going to smack you upside the head with a two by four. Your attitude, where's this coming from? How can I help you?" That's what your peers can do. They can, we say

jerking out on somebody. They can just grab you by the lapel and say, "What's going on here?" And wake you up and cause you to look at things from a fresh perspective. It's invaluable.

The second thing is, Ianiro suggests what he calls a fire board. And I think this might have an emergency kind of a connotation, maybe in the Navy or something. But he said it's a list of unaddressed problems. And then you rank the list, what's the most important pressing problem? And address it first. And don't go to number two until you finish with number one. He called it a fire board, interesting concept.

The third thing, when you've got toxic employees, there are only two choices. You give them some coaching and mentoring. You give them an opportunity to improve over a certain period of time. And the second thing, the only thing you can do, is help them move along to a place where they're going to be happier at some point in the future. But toxic people, you've got to address it. Get them that coaching. Let your folks know that an improvement plan is in place, and if you can't get them where they need to be, then they're going to be happier somewhere else.

And the fourth thing, ambiguity, uncertainty, business plan, mission, vision, and values. Clear roles, responsibilities, and accountability for the people in your organization. Training and development opportunities. So, all those things eliminate ambiguity and uncertainty, and that will help eliminate the negativity in your organization.

So, share with us in the comments, what do you think? What do you do when you've got negativity, toxicity in your organization? And share with the rest of the people in our audience. And don't forget about Boot Camp August in Denver, October in Raleigh. Get in touch with Charlotte

This is Wayne Rivers at Performance Construction Advisors, where We Build Better Contractors.