

7 fail-proof tips for self-sabotage

How to ensure you're passed over for promotion and at the top of the layoff list

If you want to ensure you are laid off during the next round of layoffs, or are passed over for the next promotion, I'm happy to recommend some tried-and-true methods for eroding your personal brand and exposing yourself to a host of unpredictable risks.

Day in and day out, whether we are conscious of it or not, we each create our own "personal brand" at work. Personal brand experts assert the multi-dimensional image we construct consists of personal appearance, attitude, competencies and a "differentiator" — the unique value proposition or benefit we offer.

Most people don't perceive themselves as possessing a brand that requires constant nurturing and refinement. In fact, in the course of obliviously being their natural selves, they engage in a wide assortment of self-sabotaging behaviours.

You may already have your own methods for undermining your personal brand but, just in case you need some fresh ideas, here are seven industrial-strength ways to self-sabotage yourself at work:

Bring your moods to work: When you show up at work and warn everyone, "I'm in a lousy mood, don't even think of approaching me today with anything," you'll certainly get the relief you seek for that day. So why worry about the long-term effects of this behaviour on your reputation?

Adopt an 'It's not my job' attitude: There are two distinct schools of practice for this method. First is the more sophisticated one, where you indicate in ever so subtle ways to your manager or colleagues, who ask you to go that extra mile, that you are already overloaded and really cannot take on anything else. The second, which is practised just as widely, is as follows: When someone asks you to help out with an extra task, you simply say, "It's not my job — can't you see I'm already overloaded with my own job?" When doing so, make sure to throw in some juicy, bubble-gum chewing noises and to visibly keep your gaze fixed on the latest celebrity gossip magazine in front of you.

Skip your RSVPs: This is a great way to



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reliably ensure the resentful meeting convenor will search for the first opportunity for retribution and readily make negative comments about you when the opportunity arises. While at it, you could also consider arriving late for meetings. Those sitting and waiting for you will be quick to knock down any idea you have or practise other forms of micro-aggression.

Gossip away: Make sure to hold onto the belief gossip is a legitimate and fun part of life at work. And ignore the new research in the field of ostracism and the brain that demonstrates people who experience social exclusion suffer in ways that can be clearly detected in MRI scans. If you're intent on being perceived as petty, non-trustworthy or malicious, making lively contributions to the office's gossip mill will do the trick.

Whine when the company does something nice for you: When the company flies you and your spouse to an all-expenses-paid weekend, make sure to complain about the food or the temperature in the Olympic-sized swimming pool. After all, they made you leave your comfy home, so shouldn't they at least make sure everything is of the highest quality?

Greet change with a sour stance: Here again, you can practise the more sophisticated version, whereby you never openly critique the change. Rather, you follow the tradition of passive resistance, relying on time-honoured practices such as eye rolling or the silent treatment. Or you

may choose the more direct method — openly demonstrate a negative or cynical attitude, complete with "This will never work" or "You can't trust management" statements. Subtle or active, these behaviours comprise one of the best ways to get your superiors to terminally label you as a "non-player." You'll also alienate colleagues, who will make every effort to flee the vortex of negativity you produce.

Skip the apologies: In the unlikely event you make a work-related mistake or hurt someone's feelings, make sure never to apologize. After all, people will quickly forget you hurt them, won't they?

If you've witnessed some of these behaviours or even practised them yourself, you know these behaviours are not only damaging to the person practising them, they also create a problematic work climate. Research consistently demonstrates organizational culture can advance or stifle organizational results. An unengaged work culture spills over into the core of a business and the service it provides.

To prevent these behaviours from corroding the organizational fabric, there are several possible actions. If you have a determined leadership team and talented HR, changes can be made from within. Creating team-operating agreements is always a worthwhile initiative.

Other times, it is useful to take everyone through training that will create joint language and norms. Training that focuses on developing one's personal brand, on self-sabotage and on professionalism is highly effective in bringing about change, especially when the training effort is then tied into organizational processes such as performance appraisals or advancement opportunities.

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