

INNOVATION BLOCKERS

Three Types of People to Fire Immediately

Throw out victims, nonbelievers and know-it-alls. They block innovation

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"I wanted a happy culture. So I fired all the unhappy people."
 — A very successful CEO (who asked not to be named)

We teach our children to work hard and never, ever give up. We teach them to be grateful, to be full of wonder, to expect good things to happen, and to search for literal and figurative treasure on every beach, in every room, and in every person. But some day, when the treasure hunt is over, we'll also teach them to fire people. Why? After working with the most inventive people in the world for two decades, we've discovered the value of a certain item in the leadership toolbox: the pink slip. How many of you out there in Innovationland have gotten the "what took you so long?" question from your staff when you finally said goodbye to a teammate who seemed always part of problems instead of solutions? These people passively-aggressively block innovation and will suck the energy out of any organisation.

THE VICTIMS

Victims are people who see problems as occasions for persecution rather than challenges to overcome. So if you want an innovative team, you simply can't include victims. Fire the victims. (Note to the HR depart-

ment: Victims are also the most likely to feel the company has maliciously terminated them. So have your documentation in order before you let victims go).

THE NONBELIEVERS

We love the Henry Ford quote: "If you think you can or think you cannot, you are correct." The difference between the winning team and the losing one that comes up short is a lack of willpower. If you are a leader who says your mission is to innovate, but you have a staff that houses nonbelievers, you are either a lousy leader or in denial. You deserve the staff you get. Terminate the nonbelievers.

THE KNOW-IT-ALLS

The best innovators are learners, not knowers. On the job, the person who can figure things out the quickest is often celebrated. And unfortunately, it is often this most-seasoned employee who becomes expert in using his or her knowledge to explain why things are impossible rather than possible.

This employee should be challenged, retrained, and compensated for failing forward. But if this person's habits are too deeply ingrained, you must let him or her go. Otherwise, this individual will keep your team from seeing opportunity right under your noses. You don't want the victims, nonbelievers, or know-it-alls. It is up to you to make sure they take their anti-innovative outlooks elsewhere.

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