

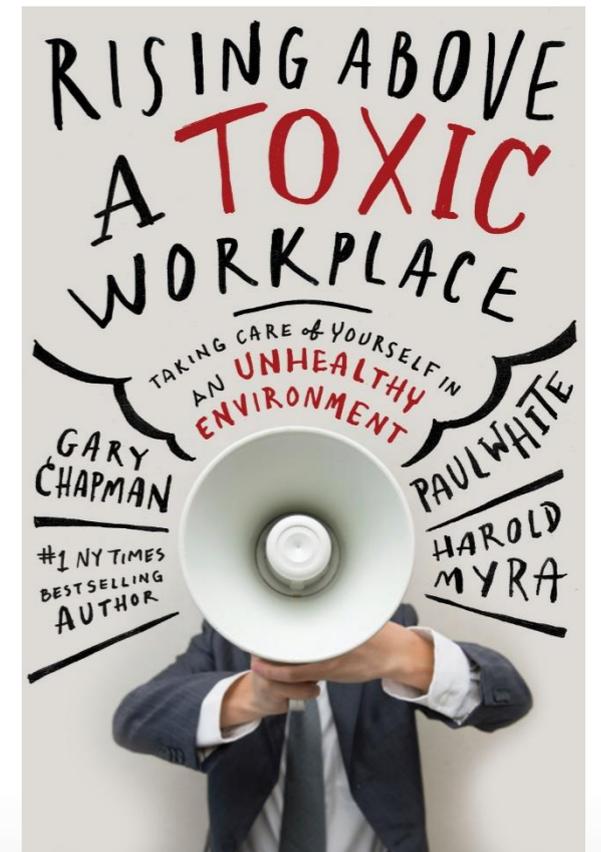


How To Avoid Becoming A Toxic Workplace

ATD – Government sector

April 18, 2016

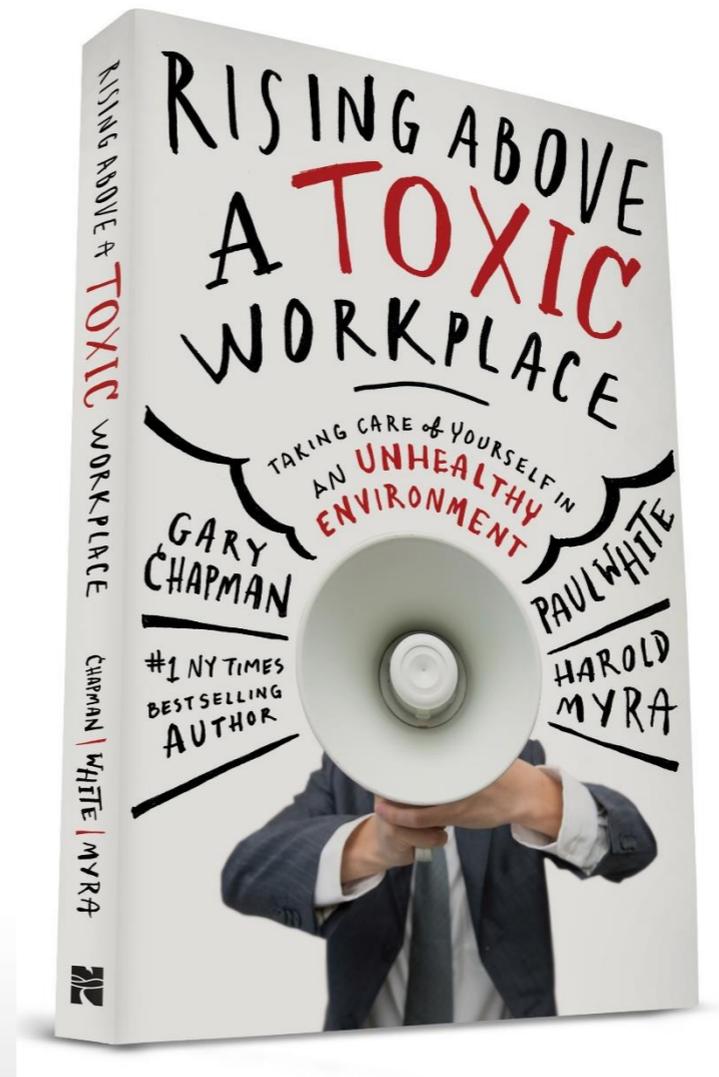
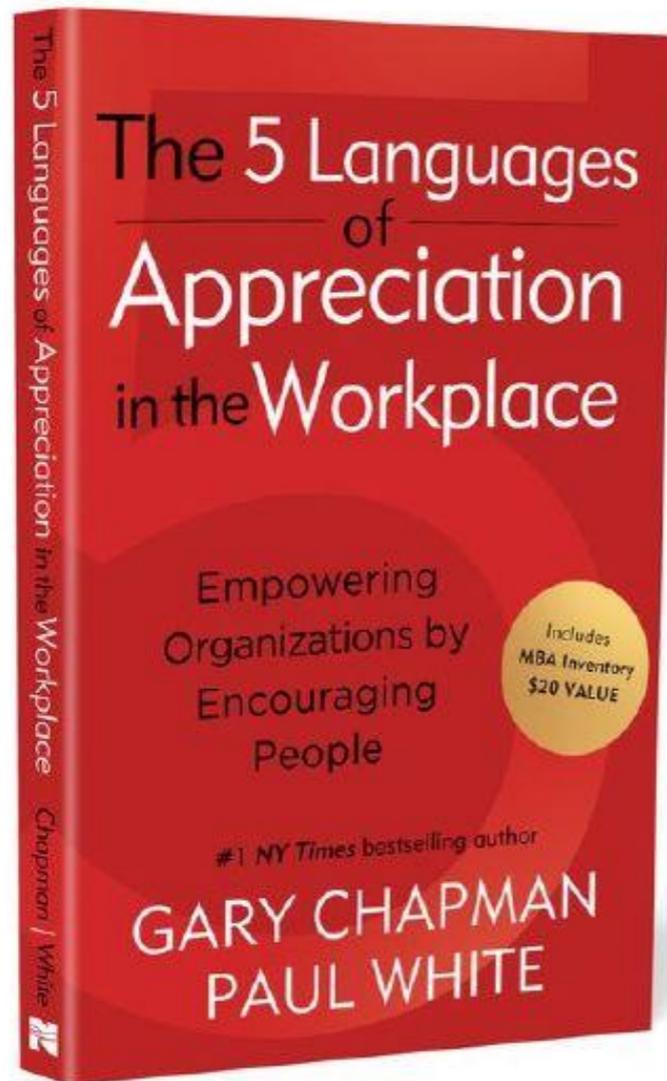
Paul White, Ph.D.



Based on *Rising Above a Toxic Workplace*
by Gary Chapman, Paul White & Harold Myra



How the Information for Today was Obtained.





Purpose of this Session

To help you:

- a) better understand what characterizes a toxic workplace,*
- b) be able to take action steps to avoid becoming a toxic workplace, or*
- c) be able to implement steps to take care of yourself, and*
- d) have some **FUN!!***
(or, at least, not become depressed!)

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**“Aside from the people, the hours, the work,
the pay, the stress and the migraines,
this is the best job I ever had.”**



Defining "*Toxic*"

Toxic (adjective)

- *poisonous*

*(e.g. the dumping of toxic waste;
alcohol is toxic to the liver.)*

- very bad, unpleasant, or *harmful*:
a toxic relationship.





Top 5 *Toxic Workplace* Settings

Hospitals
Universities & Colleges
Government Agencies
Long-term Care Facilities
Public Schools



What makes a workplace *TOXIC*?



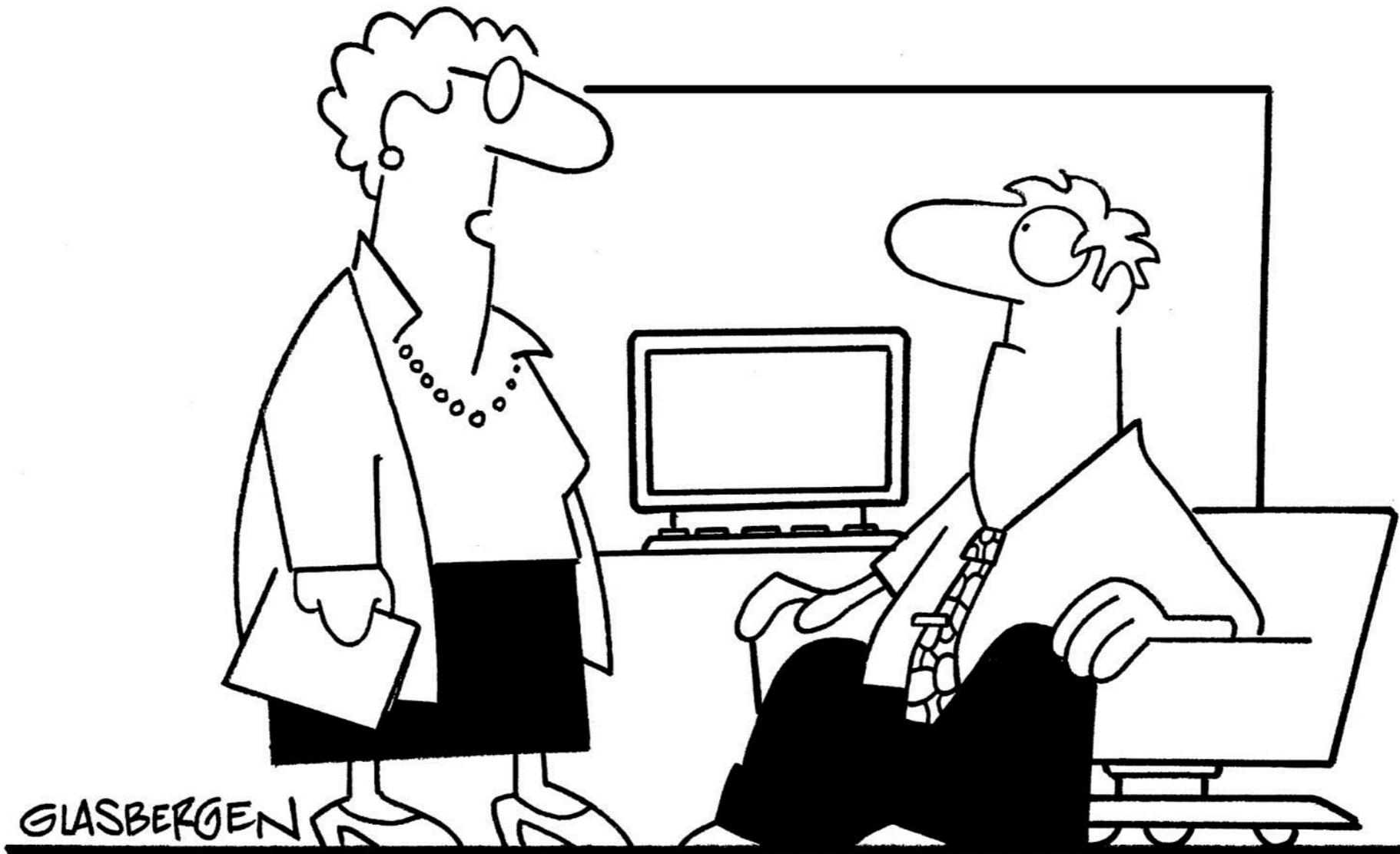
1. *Sick* Systems



Sick Systems

- Poor Communication Patterns

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“If I walk past your desk without stopping to criticize your work, that counts as a compliment.”



Sick Systems

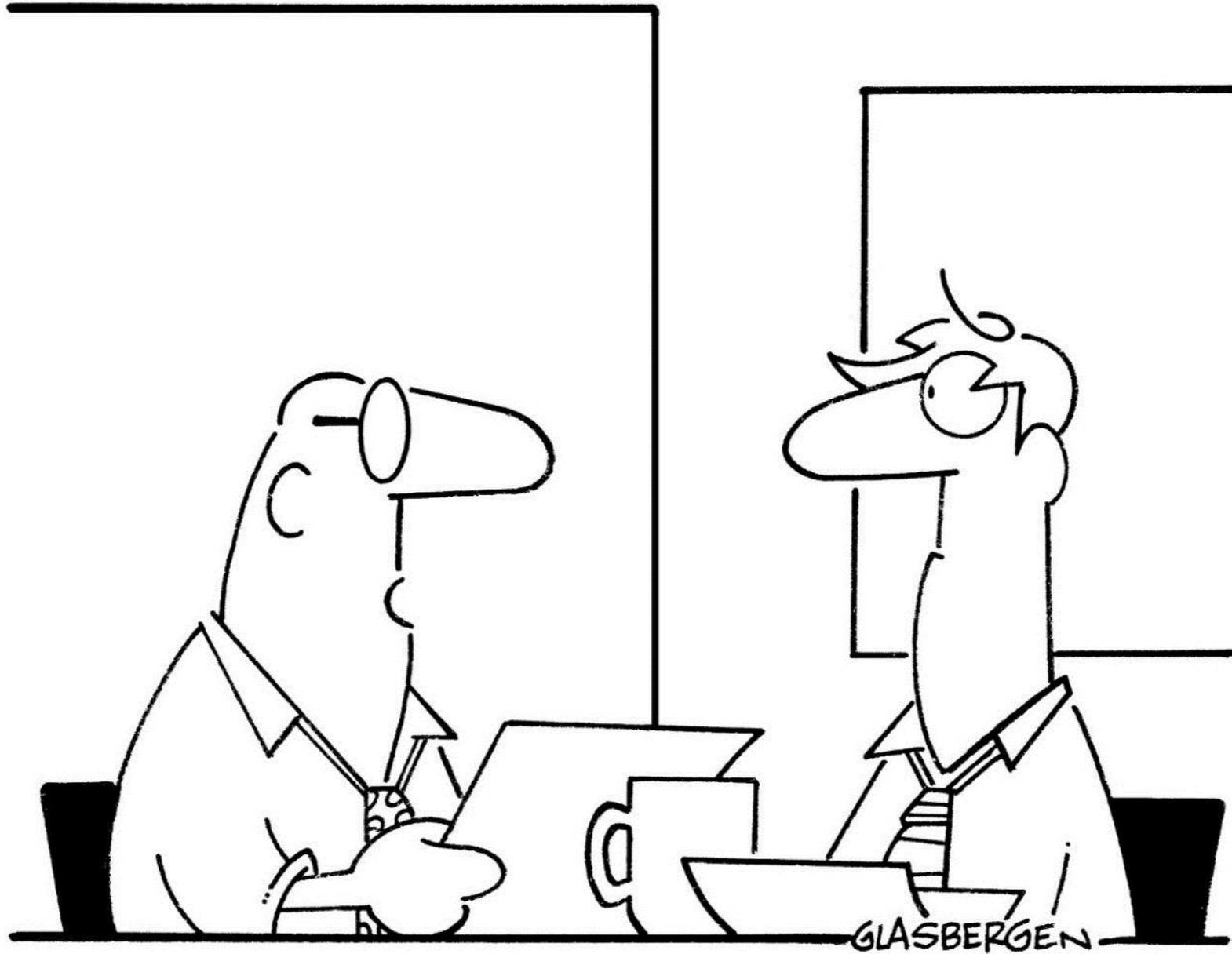
- **Poor Communication Patterns**
 - Lack of communication
 - Indirect communication



Sick Systems

- Poor Communication Patterns
- **Problems with Responsibility & Accountability**

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**“We need to make some big changes around here.
The kind of changes where many decisions are
made but nothing actually happens.”**



Sick Systems

- Poor Communication Patterns
- Problems with Responsibility & Accountability
- **Lack of Clearly Defined Roles, Responsibilities & Reporting Relationships**
 - Confusion
 - Result: Excuse & Blaming

Sick Systems

Possible *Positive* Actions to Take



1. Commit to direct communication.

Sick Systems

Possible *Positive* Actions to Take



1. Commit to direct communication.
2. Work at clarifying responsibilities.
3. Invite others to collaborate with you.



1. *Sick* Systems
2. *Toxic* Leaders



Top Ten Characteristics of *Toxic* Leaders



Important Reminder:

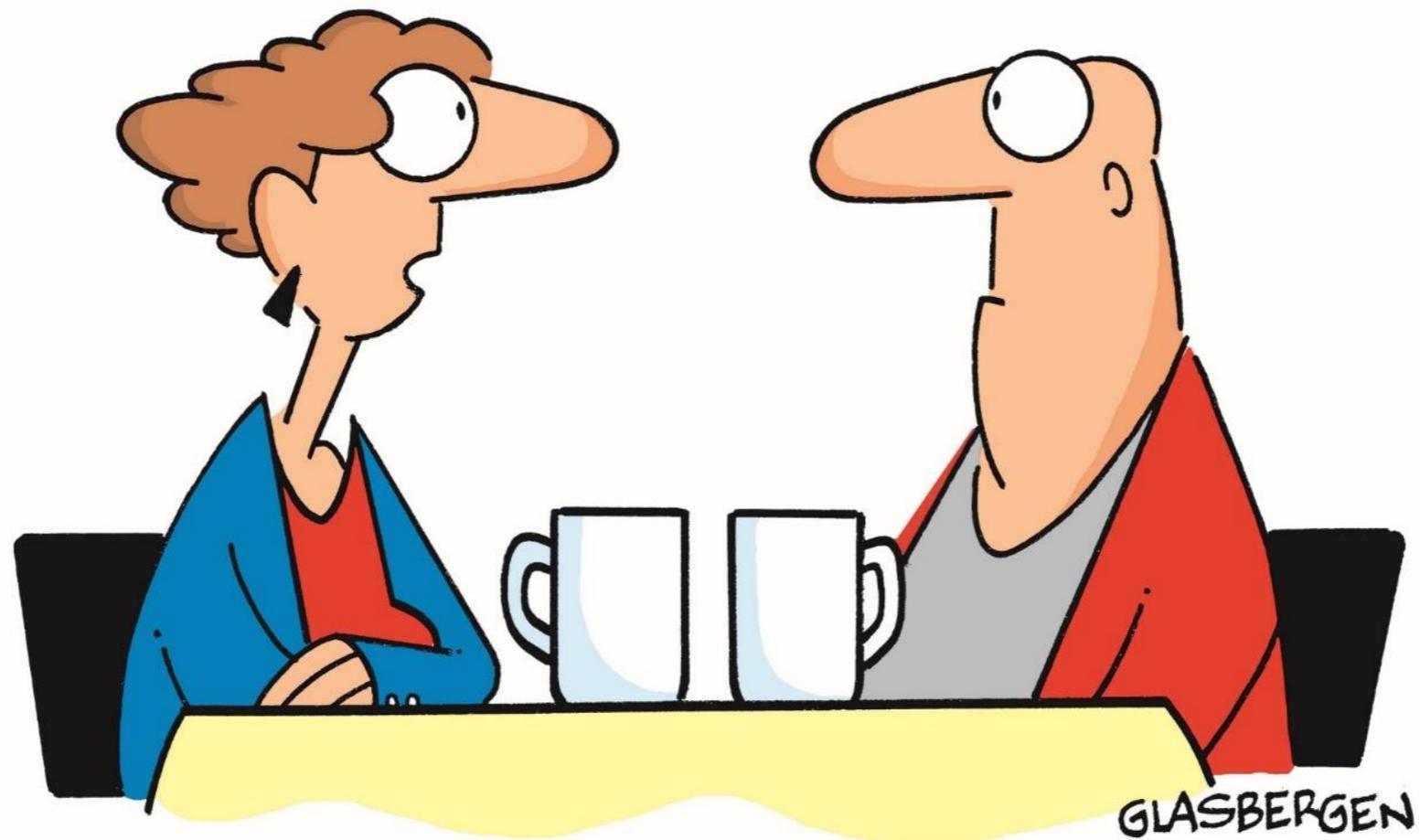
Toxic Leaders Aren't Always at the Top of the Organization.



Top Ten Characteristics of *Toxic* Leaders

10. They Look Good (at least initially)*

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**“I can’t believe my boss is such an idiot.
I thought he was brilliant when he hired me!”**



Top Ten Characteristics of *Toxic* Leaders

10. They Look Good (at least initially)
9. They're Extreme about Achieving Goals
8. They're Manipulative
7. They're Narcissistic



Top Ten Characteristics of *Toxic* Leaders

10. They Look Good (at least initially)
9. They're Extreme about Achieving Goals
8. They're Manipulative
7. They're Narcissistic
6. They Steal the Credit for Other's
Successes*

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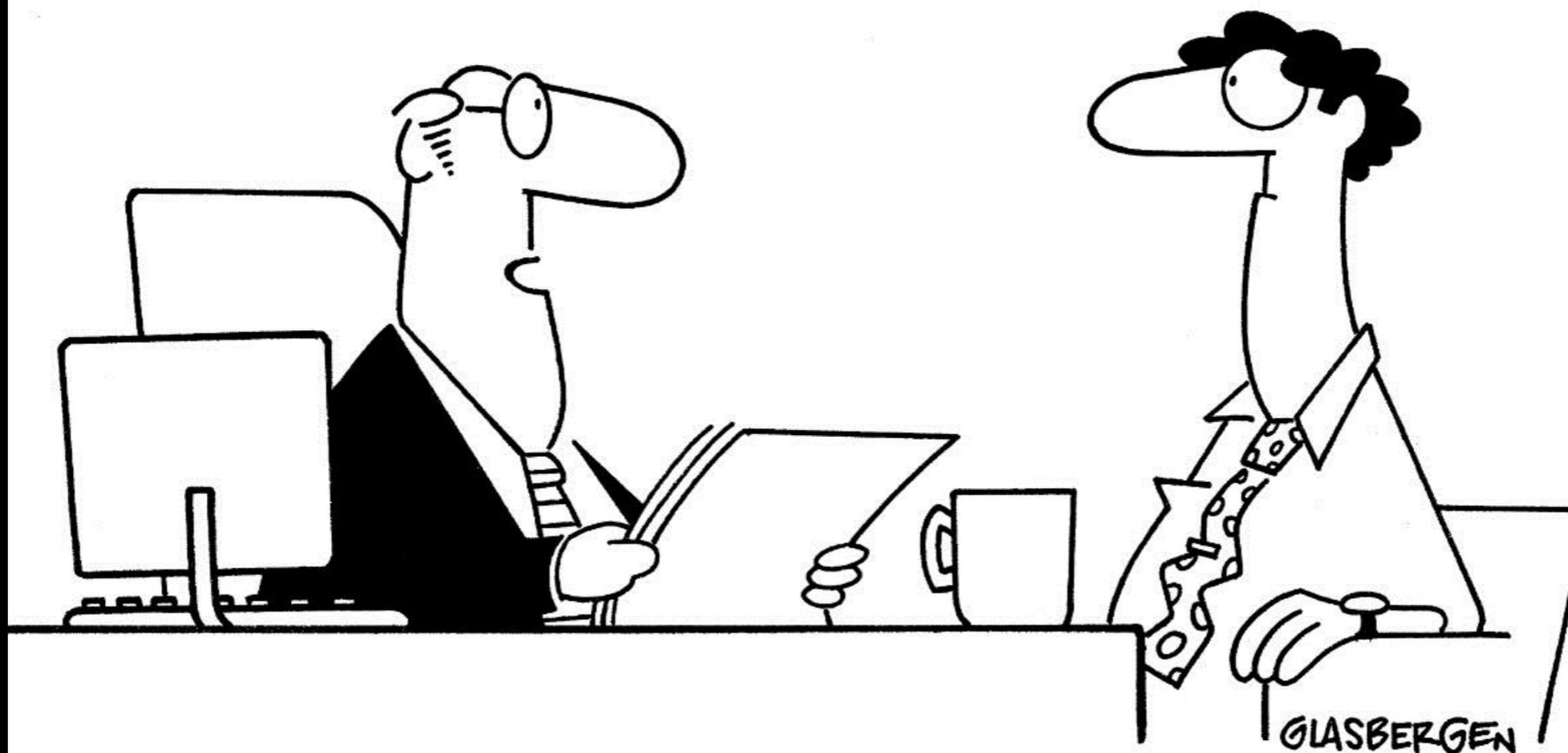
"Don't forget, I need to be taking credit for that report by three."



Top Ten Characteristics of *Toxic* Leaders

5. They're Condescending*

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**“I haven’t read your proposal yet, but I already
have some great ideas on how to improve it!”**



Top Ten Characteristics of *Toxic* Leaders

5. They're Condescending
4. They're Inauthentic
3. They Use Others
2. They Won't Address Real Risks
1. Before Things Fall Apart, They Leave



Suggestions for Positive Actions

When working for a toxic leader, **do your job** and **document your work** (knowing that you have to protect yourself.)

Seek support from those you believe are healthy and obtain input from a trusted source.

Don't try to save the organization. (pamphlet)



1. *Sick* Systems
2. *Toxic* Leaders
3. *Dysfunctional* Colleagues



Dysfunctional -

We are describing, not labeling.

"Dys" = problem

"Functional" = the ability to function

Dysfunctional -

*People who struggle to function in
everyday life.*



How **Dysfunctional** People Make You Feel **Crazy** !

- There is a crisis and has to be dealt with NOW.
- After spending time with them, you feel “fogged” and question your prior thoughts about the situation.
- You somehow feel responsible to “fix” the situation.
- If you don’t “help them out”, you are viewed as insensitive and uncaring.



Key Differences Between Functional and *Dysfunctional*

Functional	Dysfunctional
Honesty, Integrity	Deceit, withhold information



Key Differences Between Functional and *Dysfunctional*

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Direct Communication	Indirect communication



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Key Differences Between Functional and *Dysfunctional*

Functional	Dysfunctional
Honesty, Integrity	Deceit, withhold information
Direct Communication	Indirect communication
Responsibilities → Privileges	Sense of entitlement
Accept responsibility for choices	Blame others, make excuses

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“The trouble with this company is nobody wants to accept responsibility for anything. But don’t tell anyone I said that!”



Key Differences Between Functional and *Dysfunctional*

(cont'd)

Functional	Dysfunctional
Able to delay gratification	Have to meet desires now



Key Differences Between Functional and *Dysfunctional*

(cont'd)

Functional	Dysfunctional
Able to delay gratification	Have to meet desires now
Learn from mistakes	Expect to be “rescued”



Key Differences Between Functional and *Dysfunctional* (cont'd)

Functional	Dysfunctional
Able to delay gratification	Have to meet desires now
Learn from mistakes	Expect to be “rescued”
Are “real”, genuine	Focus on image & appearance



RISK: Focusing on Others





Honest Self-Evaluation

Am I a dysfunctional person?

In which areas, do I “lean” toward the dysfunctional side?



How to Deal with *Dysfunctional* People:

Accept that **you cannot change the other person** (their thoughts, viewpoint, way of behaving or their choices.)



How to Deal with *Dysfunctional* People:

Understand (and accept) that you will likely feel blamed or responsible for whatever the problem is.



How to Deal with *Dysfunctional* People:

Talk with & **get support from others** whom you believe are functional.



How to Deal with *Dysfunctional* People:

Set boundaries:

what you **are** and **are not** willing to do.



Key Component:
Your Response



“Life is 10 percent what happens to me and 90 percent how I react to it.”

John Maxwell
Leadership Guru



Truly *toxic environments* can seem overwhelming.

The key is to focus on your actions and responses – and **just start somewhere**.



Personal Application

- Identify one or two issues that struck you today.
- Pick one action that you can take in your life this week that will either:
 - Help you take better care of yourself, or
 - Keep you from contributing to the negativity in the work environment.



At an Organizational level:

- Consider taking the *Ratings Of Toxic Symptoms* scale.

Ratings Of Toxic Symptoms (ROTS) Scales



1. Poor Communication
2. Lack of Honesty & Integrity
3. Negative Environment
4. Manipulation
5. Lack of Responsibility & Accountability
6. Employees Not Valued
7. No Cooperation



Ratings of Toxic Symptoms™ (ROTS)

Test Taker : Jane Smith

Date : 1/5/2015

Ratings of Toxic Symptoms Report

Many businesses and organizations are perceived as being toxic work environments by their staff members. However, employees can be unclear how unhealthy their workplaces really are. The Ratings of Toxic Symptoms (ROTS) scale provides each person objective feedback on the overall level of toxicity of their workplace, as well as identifying the areas of most concern across ten subscales.

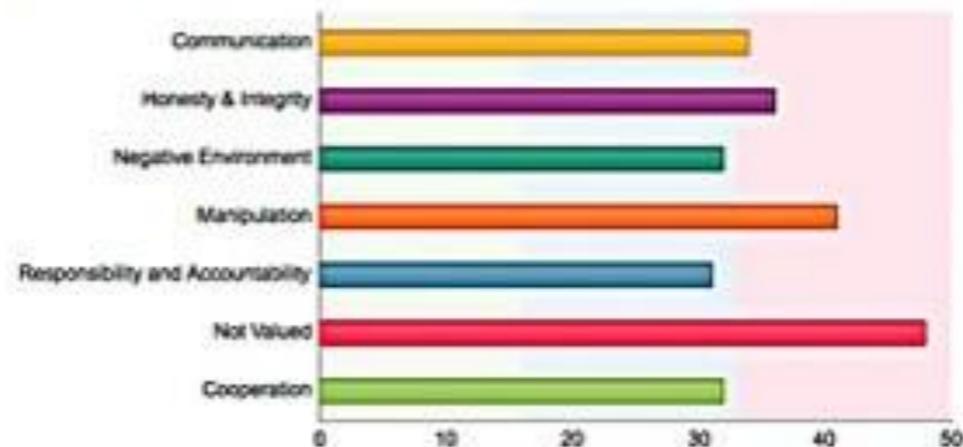
Overall Toxicity of Your Workplace



Your score on the *Ratings Of Toxic Symptoms* suggest you work in an **unhealthy work environment**. The sum of your overall scores is relatively high, indicating that you perceive a number of problematic areas in your workplace. The quality of interactions and overall work environment in your organization clearly has issues that need to be addressed.

ROTS Subscale Results

The Ratings of Toxic Symptoms yields scores on seven subscales. The chart below shows the relative level of toxicity on each subscale.



Ratings Of Toxic Symptoms (ROTS)



From the ratings given by the respondent, a customized report created immediately will:

- a) *Determine the overall level of toxicity in your workplace* (Normally Stressful, Unhealthy, Extremely Toxic, Deadly);
- b) *Identify and describe the three most problematic areas at your workplace* (from a total of seven subscales);
- c) *Provide suggestions for helpful resources to assist you in taking proactive steps to address the problem areas identified.*

To take the **Ratings of Toxic Symptoms (ROTS)** scale, go to:
www.appreciationatwork.com/shop



At an Organizational level:

- Consider taking the *Ratings Of Toxic Symptoms* scale.
- Explore taking your leaders and teams through the *Toxic Prevention & Repair* process (video + interactive kit).

Email us at: admin@appreciationatwork.com

We'll send you a free code to take the *ROTS*.



Questions?



Conclusion

All work settings are *dysfunctional* to some degree, some are just *more dysfunctional* than others!

Do what you can to help your workplace take some initial steps to move toward health.

