Ban the bullies or Creativity will suffer

Much has been written about bullying within organisations. Depending on which survey you read, statistics show that anything between 30% and 50% of workers are affected. The large spread may even be indicative of the fact that in some countries and cultures, workplace bullying is under reported. It goes without saying that this topic should be addressed purely from an HR point of view, but what else is it doing to your organisation?

On a personal level, bullying directly affects the motivation of employees. The effect on extrinsic motivation may simply mean that as an employer you notice a decrease in performance. Intrinsic motivation will also suffer as employees ask 'why should I make extra effort at work?' As an employer there is a double whammy here if you are not seen to be tackling the issues. Along with knowledge and experience, intrinsic motivation is one of the biggest drivers of Creativity on a personal level so ignore bullying at your peril.

Creativity is also one of the major components of Innovation, something that many of us strive for in the current tough economic environment. One of the underlying principles for embracing Creativity and Innovation is the new type of 'network' that needs to exist within our organisations. It is more informal than those shown in structure charts and helps us to share ideas and expertise. These networks are 'soft', they are not built from cables and computers, and they incorporate real people, your employees. Such networks are built on trust and sharing and are of course easily damaged by systematic bullying i.e. bullying that is not personal but which is accepted as the norm.

There are so many more things that you could also be damaging by ignoring individual and systematic bullying such as team working, scanning your external environment, developing initiative, organisational learning and decision making. 'So what?' you may say 'Why should I care?' To answer this simply take a look around you. The world has changed and to cope with the changes you need to change too. Old fashioned change management is not as effective as it used to be and to continually demolish and rebuild your organisation structure is expensive.

Wouldn't it be nice if you had an organisation that changed according to its environment, that could change shape and function as the economy changed, and which could, as part of its normal day to day operation generate ideas for

new products, services and processes? This is all possible, from the smallest business to the largest most bureaucratic government department. But you will never achieve any of this if bullying or harassment is rife within our organisation. Apart from physical or verbal abuse, this also includes deliberately delegating boring tasks, not carrying out annual reviews or withholding professional development opportunities.

Get started now before it is too late. You owe it to your employees and the other stakeholders involved in your business.