

Delicate balance between abusive behavior and achievement

By HEIDE B. MALHOTRA
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WASHINGTON—A new study found that abusive behavior by managers is often condoned if they meet a firm's bottom line requirements.

According to a recent University of Iowa study, abusive management—from CEOs to sergeants to shop bosses—may not only escape reprimand, but also receive bonuses and commendations, if they are high-performers.

The research evaluated any possible consequence to offensive behavior in the study, "Perpetuating Abusive Supervision: Third Party Reactions to Abuse in the Workplace."

The study found that typically, abusive actions by managers are often ignored if the managers make the numbers, are recognized by industry peers, have received awards, or have contributed to the productivity of the firm, military unit, or government.

"When a supervisor's performance outcomes are high, abusive behavior tends to be overlooked by third parties when they evaluate the supervisor's effectiveness," suggest the researchers in their study.

NOT QUITE BLACK AND WHITE

According to the study, people who are self-centered and those with egotistical traits will have no compunction in overlooking the transgression of an abusive person.

When these people balance the abuser's behavior with overall productivity, if overall productivity is high, the scale tips in favor of the abuser, as the perceived benefits overrule anything else.

On the other hand, an "empath," that is a person who can feel others' anguish and discomfort, will not so easily accept the abusive person's behavior, despite high achievement.

Empathic people will balance the losses and gains caused by abusive behavior and most likely tip their decision against the abuser, considering the overall losses to the company, the report said.

"Individuals high in empathy consistently rated abusive leaders as less effective than non-abusive leaders. Consistent with previous



TOUGH BOSS: Apple Inc. CEO Steve Jobs speaks in front of a projection of Jobs earlier in his career at Apple, during an Apple Special Event last month. Jobs is said by some to be an 'abusive' manager, but is widely respected for his contributions to the company's success. JUSTIN SULLIVAN/GETTY IMAGES

research, our results suggest that empathy leads observers of mistreatment to be more concerned with the thoughts and feelings of others," suggested the researchers.

GUARDING AGAINST ABUSIVE BOSSES

"Employees are tired of their bullying bosses and want more solutions," according to a survey published by the LegalTrainingCenter.com.

No law exists that would allow litigation for being bullied in the workplace, unless one belongs to a protected class. Additionally, most such laws are geared toward bullying an individual. The bullying of a group of people by an abusive boss has not been addressed in any legislation.

Since 2003, 15 states have introduced bills

addressing workplace bullying, including California, Hawaii, New Jersey, New York, Oklahoma, Vermont, and Washington state.

Healthy Workplace Advocates, Workplace Bullying, Trauma Institute, and others have been actively promoting legislation aimed at curbing bullying in the workplace, but again only addressing individual cases and not class action suits.

The next suggestion is that workplace bullying should be addressed by an effective performance-rating system. Most performance evaluations take productivity and reaching objectives into consideration, but are silent on behavior.

The Iowa researchers suggest that a rating system that takes into account productivity and workplace behavior, with the positive and negative balancing the outcome, be designed.

Findings are that positive ratings result in an increase of the abusive behavior, as favorable ratings are seen as acceptance of the behavior.

"Organizations want to ensure that abusive supervisors are not rated as effective, thus reinforcing abusive behavior," stated

the Iowa study.

Evaluation systems should take place in a fair environment that "take[s] into account both the outcomes achieved by supervisors and the way in which employees are treated in the process of achieving those outcomes," emphasized the Iowa University researchers.

PUBLICIZING ABUSIVE BOSSES

The Iowa researchers pointed to Steve Jobs, CEO at computing giant Apple Inc., who is viewed as a brilliant and effective head of a corporation, as a very abusive boss.

"Jobs' personal abuses are also legend: He parks his Mercedes in handicapped spaces, periodically reduces subordinates to tears, and fires employees in angry tantrums," Fortune Magazine's Peter Elkind, editor at large, wrote in a March 2008 article.

Fortune Magazine elected him CEO of the Decade in 2009 and spoke in glowing terms about him. Many books have been written about him and the uninitiated would never assume that he is an abusive boss.

EBossWatch published a list of 25 of the "Worst Bosses of 2009." One abusive boss, a former superintendent at the Ottawa County Board of Developmental Disabilities in Ohio, was forced out for creating a hostile working environment after 20 employees filed a complaint.

The list includes company owners, a water distribution superintendent, a former inspector at NASA, a former city manager, among others. EBoss invites people to rate their bosses, promising to keep the rater's identity hidden. The Web site states that such information would be provided to people hunting for a job.

CHANGING INTO A SMART EMPLOYEE

Workplace consultants recommend that instead of moaning and groaning, employees should be proactive and figure out how to deal with an abusive boss, unless another job is on the horizon. Also, the next boss may not be any better.

Many Web sites are available that suggest how to deal with a difficult work environment, including Conflict911.com.

Suggestions include keeping a professional attitude at all times, keeping a daily diary on anything the boss says or does, not bypassing the boss, asking one's boss how they envision the job to be done most effectively, staying professional at all times, and not taking the work home.

Don't forget that "The role of a supervisor sometimes attracts certain controlling-type personalities because they crave the power it gives them and because they lack such control in their own personal lives," advises Tristan Loo in an article on the Conflict911 Web site.

Toyota scrambles to stem negative publicity as new recall issued

Company recalls 8,000 Tacoma trucks

By ANTONIO PEREZ
Epoch Times Staff

NEW YORK—Toyota Motor Sales U.S.A. Inc. is scrambling to fix separate gas pedal and brake issues on upwards of 7 million vehicles, as it faces an entirely new recall—that of certain 2010 model year Tacoma pickup trucks.

Last Friday, the company issued a voluntary recall to inspect the front drive shaft on around 8,000 2010 model year Tacoma four-wheel drive trucks. The shaft in such vehicles "may include a component that contains cracks that developed during the manufacturing process. As those vehicles are used, the cracks may eventually lead to the separation of the drive shaft at the joint portion," the company said.

Owners will be notified by the company starting in mid-March.

While the latest in a string of recalls is smaller, it is the latest black eye endured by Toyota. The company is currently fixing gas pedal issues on numerous Toyota and Lexus models globally, and more than 430,000 Priuses for certain brake issues.

The company has faced public scorn and doubts about its quality, which had been perceived as among the best in the industry judging by its numerous J.D. Power & Associates reliability awards.

The House Energy and Commerce Committee will hold a hearing called "Toyota Gas Pedals: Is the Public at Risk?" on Feb. 24. In addition, the company is facing dozens of lawsuits from consumers alleging anything from injuries to lost value on their vehicles.

CONSUMER INTEREST WANES

Toyota's reputation among consumers is quickly dropping, according to a recent report by industry researcher Kelly Blue Book (KBB).

In a recent study, KBB said that as of last week, 27 percent of prospective car buyers who said they were considering purchasing a Toyota no longer are considering the brand for their next purchase. That figure is 6 percent higher than the previous week, following the initial recall announcement.

The reputation hit is spreading to Toyota's other brands. Twenty-eight percent of those considering a Scion and 23 percent of those considering a Lexus are no longer considering their purchases. In addition, the perceived value of a Toyota vehicle—in the past having one of the best resale values on KBB—has dropped.

"We are seeing a softening of both used Toyota values and the New Car Blue Book values of new Toyotas this week," Juan Flores, director of vehicle valuation at KBB, said in a statement. "The softening of values is a product of weakened consumer demand, and the realization that Toyota is going to have to offer lower prices to get some consumers to consider Toyota vehicles again."

"We are seeing shoppers on kbb.com lean more toward competitors, especially the domestics like Ford and Chevy who are offering enticing conquest incentives," said James Bell, executive market analyst for Kelley Blue Book's kbb.com.

Industry rivals Ford Motor Co. and General Motors Co. are taking advantage of fretful Toyota owners, offering incentives for any Toyota trade-ins to purchase a new Ford or GM vehicle. Ford is offering \$1,000 in trade-in cash, and GM offers a similar program as well as zero-percent financing on most models.

"Toyota is going to have to work extra hard for quite some time to overcome the 'double-whammy' it is seeing with the continuing drop in values and consumer brand consideration," Bell said.

FIXING ITS REPUTATION

According to a Wall Street Journal report, AutoNation CEO Mike Jackson said that Toyota has repaired fewer than 5 percent of the vehicles it has recalled in the United States.

Toyota, on the other hand, is scrambling to reassure current owners and potential customers. The company is considering granting longer warranties and steeper cash discounts to lure potential buyers, according to a Bloomberg report citing executives involved in the dealership discussions.

The company is throwing around an idea of including 10-year warranties and thousands of dollars in rebates on certain vehicles. Also, the company is awaiting the result of the congressional hearing to decide on any future action regarding warranties and promotions, the executives told Bloomberg.

Toyota declined to comment on the report.

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Your personal finance advisor: Car buying tips

By ELAINE RACHLIN

It's a good time to buy a car—if you do it right.

As automobile manufacturers work to recover what was lost in the Great Recession, many are offering up sweet deals to car-buying customers. If you're among those tempted to drive off the showroom with shiny new wheels, it's important to do your homework first. Fortunately, there are plenty of resources available to help you in the process. Here are a few things to keep in mind as you begin car shopping.

BE FINANCIALLY PREPARED

First and foremost, figure out what you can afford. You can be certain that most dealers will try to assure you that anything you look at is affordable, but don't take their word for it. Do an honest assessment of your own finances and determine what fits your budget and your needs. (Remember: A used car is always an option if your budget is tight.)

DETERMINE WHAT'S RIGHT FOR YOU

If you're a car aficionado, you probably know what you're looking for and what your choices may be. If you aren't, you should be sure to test drive a number of vehicles from different manufacturers and find what feels right for you (and matches your budget). If possible, check out consumer reviews of specific vehicles you're interested in to help you compare.

KNOW WHAT IT'S REALLY WORTH

Web sites such as Edmonds.com or a TrueCar™ price report allow you to find out what the dealer's invoice price is. This puts you in a position

to negotiate with the dealer before signing on the dotted line.

If possible, get quotes from different dealers for the vehicle you want. There are online options you can pursue for this as well to avoid having to drive to distant dealerships.

ASSESS THE VALUE OF YOUR TRADE-IN

If you're trading in your current vehicle, it's important to know what it's really worth to the dealer. Check the Kelley Blue Book or NADA Guides on used car prices to find out the fair value of your trade-in, then you can be in a position to negotiate with the dealer. Many experts recommend not telling the dealer that you'll be including a trade-in until they've made their best offer on the car you hope to buy or lease.

FIND YOUR BEST FINANCING OPTIONS

Think carefully when determining whether buying or leasing is the best option for you. Most models today are capable of running well over 100,000 miles and have the potential to last for many years. If you're borrowing money for the purchase, consider loan options beyond what the dealer offers to assess what's the most economical for you.

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