**The Top 5 Things You Should Never Do At Work**

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I had an 18-year corporate career in publishing and marketing that was highly successful on the outside, but on the inside, it was not. I rose to the level of Vice President and managed multimillion-dollar budgets and global initiatives, but throughout my career, I faced a number of excruciating experiences of gender discrimination, sexual harassment, work-life balance failures, chronic illness and exhaustion, being sabotaged and betrayed by colleagues, and the continual nagging feeling that I was meant for different work (but simply couldn’t figure out what it was - [here's more](http://kathycaprino.com/about-kathy-caprino/) on that story).

And I made a great number of huge mistakes. I did some important things right too, but my missteps were legendary (at least in my own mind). When I look back on my 30 years of working, and the careers of the hundreds of folks I train, coach and teach, five blunders stand out from all the rest as the most negative, damaging, and irreversible in your career and professional life.

**The 5 things you should never do at work are:**

**1. Speak, behave or quit out of rage or revenge**

Most people spend more hours at work than anywhere else, so it’s normal and expected that we will experience the full gamut of emotions while engaged in our work. I’m all for bringing our whole selves to work as well, and being as authentic, honest, and transparent as humanly possible at our jobs. That said, I’ve watched the inevitable destruction of losing control of your emotions and acting out rashly and impulsively from rage or despair.

For example, in my early 20’s, I screamed an obscenity at the top of my lungs to my boss who I felt was harassing me, and I did it in front of the entire office. He had no choice but to fire me. Thankfully, I had another job offer in the wings so the damage was not too serious. While it felt fantastic (for one split second) to swear at him, what has stayed with me over time is the shock and shame of how out of control I felt during that time. I vowed never to lose it like that and act out of rage or fury again. If you act impulsively and rashly at work, you will likely lose much more than your self-respect.

**2. Backstab your colleagues**

I’m astounded at how many people today feel completely comfortable ridiculing, disparaging or undermining their colleagues, co-workers and even their friends. I used to be that kind of person – talking behind someone’s back if I felt they were behaving poorly, meanly, or less than professionally. I learned later (in my therapy training) that this is called triangulation – telling a third party about something that makes you anxious or upset instead of dealing with it head on with the individual in question. Why do we do that? Because we lack the courage and fortitude to address the problem directly, or we feel it just won’t work out if we do. It relieves our anxiety to share the problem, but it does nothing to resolve it.

Other folks may call this “gossip” (gossip, by the way, is another “must not do” in the workplace). But backstabbing your colleagues is a special brand of negative behavior because it aims to hurt. And when you desire to hurt others, it will be you who suffers. In one job, I backstabbed a colleague because it seemed that she received all the accolades, promotions and perks because of her beauty and her obsequiousness to our bosses. All of that might have been true, but trying to take her down behind her back didn’t work. That behavior never will, in the long run. You’ll only embarrass and humiliate yourself and it will come back around to bite you eventually.

**3. Lie**

We tell lies most often when we think that the truth will hurt us somehow, or when we want to avoid facing the consequences of our truth. The problem with lying is two-fold: 1) When you tell yourself you’re not capable of facing reality or dealing with the consequences, you make yourself right – you’ll grow less powerful, capable, bold, respectable, and trustworthy over time, and 2) the lies you tell must be perpetuated, which is exhausting and drains you from vital energy you need to reach your fullest potential.

If you have told lies at work – about your skills and talents, experience and background, about the status of work you’re overseeing, or about who you are and what you are capable of, I’d highly recommend taking a long, hard look at what you’re afraid of, and instead of keeping up the front, get in the cage with those fears and begin working through them.

**4. Proclaim that you’re miserable**

Just the other day, I was talking to a former client who had marched into her boss’s office that week and shared that she was miserable at work and volunteered for a severance package. I’ve done that myself – been so unhappy at work that I put my hand up for a package. I didn’t get it, and neither did my client. After sharing that news and not receiving the package, you’re stuck in a deeply unsettling situation of the employer knowing you’re a terrible fit for your role. There are a few specific instances where this might be the right move, but in general, sharing that you hate your job is not the way to go.

*But what if it’s the truth?* My father used to say that there are 10 different ways to say anything, and I think he’s right. Phrases like “miserable,” “unhappy,” “fed up,” “ready to leave,” and “need to go” are not helpful when you’re talking to your colleagues, bosses, or HR staff.

What is the better way? Talk about what you’re great at and love to do, what you’ve accomplished, and what you’re ready for. Share your work highlights and new directions you’re excited and committed to take your career, and discuss your plans and desires for growth and change. Open the door for new opportunities at your current employer that will expand our skills, your resume and your talents. Try to find ways at your current job (where you’re already getting paid) to grow, stretch and build yourself. Explore every option available to you for becoming what you want to without walking out in anger and disgust. Your employer might very well be able to sponsor and support your growth and change, but it won’t happen if you stomp in and say “I’m miserable and it’s your fault.”

**5. Burn bridges**

Literally the biggest lesson I’ve learned in business is that success is all about relationships. It’s truly about who you know, and how they feel and think about you (and how you make them feel). I’m not saying that your amazing talent and skill aren’t important. Of course they are. I am saying that we don’t thrive and succeed alone. We need other people. And these people are not just our former bosses – they are people who reported to you, teamed with you, shared coffee and drinks with you, took training sessions with you, got yelled at alongside of you, and weathered tough times with you.

Every single one of your relationships is vitally important to you and your future, so craft them with care. Avoid people you don’t trust or like, but don’t burn bridges. After 30 years in business I’ve seen that there are hundreds of people we interact with daily who eventually could become our strongest allies, advocates and fans, if we protect and nurture our relationships as the key, enriching asset they are.