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## The 10 worst work habits

- Story Highlights
- Putting tasks off until the last minute invites plenty of problems
- Don't cross the line by talking to your boss like you talk to your best friend
- Refusing to participate in any work-related social activities can hurt your career
- Keep rants about the company private -- not on the Internet

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When two people fall in love, they only see sunshine and rainbows when they look into each other's eyes. If you asked, "What's the worst trait of your boyfriend or girlfriend?" they would answer, "Absolutely, positively nothing!"

Ask that same question a few years later when they're living together and have seen each other at their respective worst. You'll get a pretty good list:

"She cuts her toenails on the coffee table."

"He speaks in a cutesy voice on behalf of the dog."

"She kicks me in her sleep."

Hopefully none of these nuisances find their way into your work life, but other ones probably do. Everyone has some weaknesses in their work behavior that they need to work on, and they often extend beyond annoyances (such as eating a smelly lunch at your desk) and become problems for your career.

Here are 10 work habits that you should try to break:

### 1. Procrastination

A lot of people work best under pressure, or at least they say so. With everyone having a different personality, you can't say a strict schedule works best for all employees. Putting tasks off until the last minute, however, invites plenty of problems, even if you think the final result will be glorious.

When you leave yourself no wiggle room to complete a task, you run the risk of encountering an unexpected obstacle that makes you miss the deadline. Even if the situation's out of your hands, everyone will be left wondering why you didn't plan better and account for last-minute emergencies.

### 2. Being a sloppy e-mailer

E-mails are second nature to most people these days, and in informal communications they've become a digital Post-It note. We type out a message and send them without proofreading or double-checking the recipients. That's a recipe for disaster.

If you haven't learned your lesson by now, the day will soon come when you accidentally "Reply All" to an e-mail and a slew of unintended readers receive a silly note you only intended your co-worker to read.

### 3. Confusing informal with disrespectful

In many workplaces the boss might be the decision maker, but he or she isn't the stern, humorless caricature you saw on TV. Using your supervisor's first name and going for some drinks after work are common in many industries.

Still, you are the employee and the boss is the boss -- the one who can fire you and tell you what to do. Don't cross the line by talking to him or her as if you're talking to one of your direct reports or even your best friend. You need to show some respect for their authority.

#### **4. Taking advantage of leeway**

Some companies are strict about the time you clock in and out. Others have guidelines but no hard rules. So you can arrive at 8:35 a.m. and no one cares. If over time you're arriving at 9:10 a.m. and leaving at 4 p.m. (with plenty of breaks in between), your reputation will suffer.

This also goes for dress codes. Business casual is up to interpretation, but ripped jeans and concert tees probably don't fall under your company's accepted definition.

#### **5. Refusing to mingle**

Plenty of wisdom lies in the advice not to mix personal and professional lives. However, refusing to take part in any social activity -- such as the office potluck or a happy hour -- will not help your career.

You don't need to be the resident party animal, but being personable with your colleagues helps build camaraderie. You get to know other people better and they get to know you as more than the person they pass in the halls.

#### **6. Always running late**

This isn't the same as abusing leeway; this is a matter of trust. If you're late to work, to meetings and with projects, your boss and colleagues will associate that trait with you. When it's time for a promotion or to deal with an important client, everyone will think twice before giving you the opportunity. Who wants to trust the person who can't manage his or her time?

#### **7. Being rigid**

One of the unfair aspects of the working world is that sometimes it seems you can't win. If you're hired to do a job, most bosses don't want you passing the day by reading your favorite book.

The reason: You were hired to do a job, so do it. But if the boss comes to you with a new project that's outside the parameters of your usual duties, it's still yours to do. "You don't pay me to do that" isn't something you want to tell your supervisor.

#### **8. Acting as the resident contrarian**

We all love your spirited personality, but try not to be the person in the meeting who always has a better idea and can tell you why everyone else's idea is dumb.

Voices of opposition are often missing in many workplaces because too many eager employees want to be "yes" men and women. But too much negativity grates on nerves and makes people dread hearing your voice. Continue to be a critical thinker, but make sure you're doing what's best for the company and not just trying to be the loudest voice in the room.

#### **9. Badmouthing the company**

With blogs, [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and a host of other sites, you have plenty of opportunity to vent your frustration with life. If you're going to complain about how dumb your boss is and how much you hate your job, keep those rants private.

The Internet is public domain and comments have a way of finding their way back to all the wrong people. If you wouldn't stand outside your boss's office and tell a co-worker how ready you are to quit, don't express the same thoughts in an open forum.

#### **10. Politicking**

Office politics are often unavoidable, and sometimes having a grasp on what's going on can benefit you, but you shouldn't spend more time masterminding office warfare than you do working.

Getting caught in the crosshairs of a workplace controversy can be out of your control, but if you're the one instigating the drama, you're earning a bad reputation. You're the person who starts trouble and whom no one trusts. That's the kind of notoriety that follows you from one workplace to another.

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