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Destructive leadership:
Causes, consequences and countermeasures

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In 2010, David Matsuda, an anthropology professor, was asked to study why almost 30 U.S. soldiers in Iraq had committed or attempted suicide in the past year. His investigation showed that while those soldiers often had major problems in their personal lives, the victims also had in common at least one leader (sometimes a couple of leaders) who made their lives hell. While the evidence did not show that the soldiers' leaders directly caused them to commit or attempt suicide, it did support the notion that the leaders who had made their lives hell had helped to push them over the brink. It was this finding that forced the U.S. military to confront the problem of "toxic" leadership in the army.

As a first stage in attempting to fix the problem, the military in 2012 published their definition of toxic leadership:

Toxic leadership is a combination of self-centered attitudes, motivations, and behaviors that have adverse effects on subordinates, the organization, and mission performance. This leader lacks concern for others and the climate of the organization, which leads to short- and long-term negative effects. The toxic leader operates with an inflated sense of self-worth and from acute self-interest. Toxic leaders consistently use dysfunctional behaviors to deceive, intimidate, coerce, or unfairly punish others to get what they want for themselves. The negative leader completes short-term requirements by operating at the bottom of the continuum of commitment, where followers respond to the positional power of their leader to fulfill requests. This may achieve results in the short term, but ignores the other leader competency categories of leads and develops. Prolonged use of negative leadership to influence followers undermines the followers' will, initiative, and potential and destroys unit morale.

Various studies estimate that the number of toxic leaders in the army ranges from 10% to 30%. While the focus is initially (and deservedly) on the individual leaders labeled as toxic,

attention has also been paid to the mindset of followers (i.e., military subordinates) and the prevailing climate/environment in the military. The military is viewed as an organization where pride, respect and loyalty are of paramount importance. In such an environment, junior officers may be loath to publically identify poor behavior by their superiors. In addition, several recent military conflicts and loss of senior personnel to private security companies had resulted in relatively inexperienced personnel being promoted more rapidly than would otherwise have been the case. The case of toxic leadership in the army seems a classic triangle of destructive leaders, susceptible followers and a conducive environment.

In response to this situation, the military identified a small number of officers it considered were toxic and removed them from their jobs. In addition, the army implemented a small pilot program of 360-degree evaluations so that subordinates could anonymously and truthfully evaluate their superiors without fear of retribution. Such measures are believed to be showing promise, but many believe there is still some way to go.

WHAT IS DESTRUCTIVE LEADERSHIP?

The case of the toxic leaders in the U.S. military is a classic example of what is more commonly known as "destructive leadership." Unfortunately the military is not the only organization where destructive leadership occurs. In the last year, several high-profile organizations (including government agencies and churches) have received media attention for having destructive leaders in their ranks. While the study and identification of destructive leadership is a relatively recent phenomenon, the same cannot be said for the ubiquity of its practice.

While the example of toxic leadership in the U.S. military is a recent one, history is filled with examples of destructive leaders from all walks of life and spheres of influence. Perhaps two of the most well known destructive organizational leaders

are Enron's Jeffrey Skilling and Ken Lay. During their time at the helm they are said to have created an environment of "benign followers" and used management practices that instilled fear in their workers. However there has been no shortage of such leaders in a variety of arenas. Seven-time Tour De France and Olympic bronze medal winner Lance Armstrong has been identified as a leader who created an environment where susceptible followers allowed his dishonest practices to proceed without question. Al ("Chainsaw") Dunlap was rated by *Time Magazine* as one of the all-time "Ten Worst Bosses." As his nickname might suggest, Al was seen to make a habit out of business brutality and concentrated on cost cutting at the absolute expense of everything else. Described variously as mean, ill-tempered and arrogant, Dunlap was sacked after two years at Sunbeam. The company never recovered and went into bankruptcy soon afterwards. Recently, the book (and movie) *The Wolf of Wall Street* also detailed the corporate crimes and personal excesses of Jordan Belfort. Bill Cosby, the well-known comedian, is currently under criminal investigation by the Los Angeles Police Department, and a number of FIFA (soccer's top governing body) officials have been indicted on corruption charges covering the last 20 years.

So, if history is scattered with destructive leaders, why is the study of them a recent phenomenon? Perhaps this is because academics, organizations and managers have traditionally sought to improve organizational performance through the study of good leadership, effective leadership, visionary and charismatic leadership. It seems that until recently the "darker side" of leadership had escaped closer scrutiny. By darker side we refer to those types of leaders who are known as abusive, tyrannical, bullying, toxic, bad or narcissistic. Such leaders are also often described as evil, callous, incompetent, intemperate, and rigid or insular. Collectively such leaders fall under the umbrella of destructive leadership. Fortunately, these types of behaviors are no longer accepted as appropriate or as "normal behavior" within organizations. Several studies support the notion that destructive leadership is common in the workplace and have estimated the level of destructive leaders in organizations at approximately 25%. This is in line with the U.S. military findings.

However, the term destructive leader should not be applied to individuals who occasionally "act badly." While one or infrequent random acts of incompetence, bullying behavior, brutality, malice or callousness may be inappropriate, they do not qualify under the banner of destructive leadership. For a leader to be labeled as destructive, his or her behavior must be seen as volitional, systematic, and repeated over a long period of time. It is behavior that may harm or intends to harm organizations and/or followers by either encouraging followers to pursue goals that contravene the legitimate interests of the organization and/or employing a leadership style that involves the use of harmful methods of influence with followers. The behavior of Enron's Skilling and Lay, Cycling's Lance Armstrong, Sunbeam's Al Dunlap and those leaders sacked from the U.S. military seem to fall well within the scope of this definition. These destructive leaders harmed not just their immediate followers but also the organizations for which they worked.

WHAT DO DESTRUCTIVE LEADERS DO?

Clearly identifying what constitutes destructive leader behavior is more complex than it might initially appear. The same

U.S. Army survey that was used to identify destructive leaders also revealed that many subordinates perceived that they worked under an exemplary leader. Might some of these exemplary leaders have been tyrannical, callous, rigid or intemperate at times — perhaps they were? It seems then, that the old saying "everything in moderation" applies well to the notion of destructive leadership. There are many effective leader behaviors which, done in excess, may become indicative of destructive leadership. For example, a leader who carefully monitors the performance of subordinates and mentors them in the best way to perform the task may be seen as engaging in effective leader behavior. However, when that monitoring and mentoring becomes excessive, the leader is more likely to be accused of micromanaging, a commonly cited destructive leader behavior. The problem, of course, is how to determine when enough becomes too much. There are some leader behaviors that, even when done in small amounts, are inherently destructive. Taking credit for the work of others, sexual harassment or lying about important issues, even when rarely done, fall within the realm of destructive behavior.

A further complication we face in identifying destructive leaders is that these leaders may behave badly in a number of areas while being extremely competent at a number of others. For example, a leader may communicate clearly, have an excellent long-term view of how to achieve success in the organization and reward high performance effectively BUT be an abusive bully in other situations. Is this individual a truly "destructive" leader? If the behaviors are detrimental to subordinates, the team or the organization itself, then the answer is most likely yes.

HOW CAN A DESTRUCTIVE LEADER BE IDENTIFIED?

So what help is there for organizations that wish to diagnose whether destructive leadership exists? The Destructive Leadership Questionnaire (DLQ) is one of a number of surveys that identify dysfunctional or toxic leadership by asking subordinates and peers to identify specific destructive behaviors a leader exhibits. The short version of the DLQ lists 22 discrete behaviors that are frequently cited as characteristic of destructive leaders. These behaviors are listed in Table 1.

As well as including the 22 behaviors, within Table 1 we have also provided a rating guide that a subordinate, peer or leader could utilize to identify the frequency that they or others engage in destructive leadership behaviors within their own work team or organization. You may wish to take a few minutes now to rate the frequency with which you personally engage in these behaviors or the frequency with which you have seen others in your organization engage in them. Also shown in Table 1 are the average ratings of the frequency of destructive leader behaviors reported by over 2000 witnesses or targets of destructive leader behaviors in a recent study (described below).

As can be seen in Table 1, DLQ statements can be further delineated into broader categories. Some of the behaviors listed relate to fairly generic (but still destructive) aspects of leadership incompetence (i.e., ineffective at negotiation, unable to prioritize and delegate, or exhibits a lack of skill to do their job). Other behaviors focus specifically on performance management aspects of the leader—subordinate relationship.

Table 1 Twenty-Two Destructive Leader Behavior Categories.

Destructive Leader Behaviors	I Do It	I Have Seen It	Average Frequency[a]	
			Target	Witness
Generic Management Incompetence				
Make Significant Decisions without Information			2.37	2.29
Ineffective at Negotiation			1.77	1.42
Unable to Deal with New Technology and Change			1.20	0.93
Ineffective at Coordinating and Managing			2.18	1.92
Fail to Seek Appropriate Information			2.07	2.06
Act in an Insular Manner			1.65	1.37
Communicate Ineffectively			2.12	1.94
Exhibit a Lack of Skills to Do Their Job			2.03	1.58
Unable to Prioritize and Delegate			1.78	1.45
Unable to Understand a Long Term View			2.03	1.47
Unable to Make An Appropriate Decision			1.58	1.36
Managing Subordinate Performance				
Micro-Manage and Over-Control			2.14	2.10
Unclear About Expectations			1.97	1.47
Unable to Develop and Motivate Subordinates			2.12	2.06
Political Behaviors				
Play Favorites			2.18	2.25
Tell People Only What They Wanted to Hear			1.74	1.83
Personal Behaviors				
Lie or Engage in Other Unethical Behaviors			1.76	1.48
Act Inappropriately in Interpersonal Situations			1.77	1.71
Engage in Behaviors That Reduced Their Credibility			1.81	1.77
Exhibit Inconsistent, Erratic Behavior			1.96	1.73
Unwilling to Change Their Mind			2.13	1.96
Bullying				
Act in a Brutal or Bullying Manner			1.46	1.31

Instructions: Rate the frequency with which you do these behaviors (Do It) or have seen others do them (Seen It) where 0 = Do not engage in this behavior, 1 = Very Infrequently Engage, 2 = Occasionally Engage, 3 = Frequently Engage, and 4 = Very Frequently.

[a] The average frequency shown is the average ratings of destructive leaders from targets or witnesses in a study of over 2000 U.S. workers conducted using the Destructive Leadership Questionnaire.

These include: unable to develop and motivate subordinates, micromanaging and over-controlling, and being unclear about expectations. Destructive behaviors related to organizational "politics" are also found in the DLQ, e.g., plays favorites or tells people only what they want to hear. Some of the destructive behaviors relate to inappropriate personal behaviors such as telling lies, being unable to change their mind, engaging in inappropriate interpersonal behaviors. As one might expect, acting in a brutal or bullying manner is another key aspect of destructive leadership identified on the DLQ.

Behaviors identified on other measures of destructive leadership include self-aggrandising, belittling of subordinates, lack of consideration for others, forcing conflict resolution and discouraging initiative. While these behaviors may vary in their intent, the level of malice, intensity, duration and the extent to which they are directed specifically at subordinates, teams or the organization as a whole qualifies them as destructive leadership behaviors.

WHICH DESTRUCTIVE LEADERSHIP BEHAVIORS OCCUR MOST OFTEN IN ORGANIZATIONS?

To determine the frequency of destructive leadership in organizations, we recently conducted a study of U.S. workers. Our sample included 1064 individuals who described themselves as a direct *target* of destructive leadership behavior and 1063 individuals who described themselves as *witnesses* to these destructive leader behaviors. We asked respondents to think of a "bad" leader with whom they had worked for at least 12 months. They then rated the perceived frequency with which this bad boss engaged in each of 22 behaviors represented in the short version of the DLQ. While reading these results you may wish to refer to the checklist you completed in Table 1.

Our study confirmed that destructive leaders engage in some behaviors more frequently than others (see Table 1 for the average frequency ratings of targets and witnesses). For individuals who had described themselves as "targets" of destructive leadership, behaviors such as *Making Significant Decisions without Information, Playing Favorites*, and *Being Ineffective at Coordinating and Managing* were rated as the most frequent destructive behaviors. Behaviors such as *Inability to Deal with New Technology, Acting in a Brutal or Bullying Manner*, and *Acting in an Insular Manner* were rated as the least frequent destructive behaviors for this group.

Interestingly, it seems that not only do **targets** identify these behaviors as being used most frequently, but so did **witnesses** of destructive leadership. Specifically, **witnesses** rated *Making Significant Decisions without Information, Micro-Managing & Over-Controlling*, and *Playing Favorites*

as the most frequent destructive leadership behaviors. They rated *Inability to Deal with New Technology, Acting in a Brutal or Bullying Manner*, and *Inability to Make an Appropriate Decision* as the least frequently observed behaviors.

DOES DESTRUCTIVE LEADERSHIP BECOME MORE OR LESS FREQUENT OVER TIME?

To answer this question we also asked our respondents whether destructive leader behaviors tended to increase, decrease, or remain constant over the life cycle of a subordinate—leader relationship. We asked respondents to reflect on the early, middle and later periods of their relationship with the destructive leader and indicate the frequency of the 22 DLQ behaviors in each of those periods.

Again, we found that when we compared ratings made by *targets* to those of *witnesses*, responses from both groups indicated that a leader's behavior became worse over time, with the behavior of those reported by targets only marginally worse than those reported by witnesses. Additionally, for all destructive leader behaviors surveyed, the frequency of these behaviors increased at each period of that relationship. Given the similarity of responses from both targets and witnesses, our data provides clear evidence that unmanaged destructive leader behaviors increase over time. This result supports the need for early intervention prior to the behaviors becoming more frequent and possibly entrenched.

AM I A DESTRUCTIVE LEADER?

Now take a look at the frequency ratings that you made for each of the destructive leader behaviors shown in Table 1. The average frequency ratings in the last two columns are those made by either targets or witnesses of destructive behavior in our study and represent their ratings across all three leader—subordinate life cycle periods (early, middle and late). By and large the average ratings shown in Table 1 are quite similar to the frequency of destructive behaviors during the **middle** period of a leader—subordinate relationship. The middle period is one by which destructive behavior by a leader has tended to increase substantially from earlier in his/her relationship with a subordinate. If the frequency ratings you made are similar or higher than these average ratings there may be some cause for concern and that concern should stimulate action to reduce the behavior. We will discuss a variety of interventions that may be helpful later in the paper.

WHAT CONTRIBUTES TO DESTRUCTIVE LEADERSHIP IN ORGANIZATIONS?

As with any complex phenomenon there is a range of contributing factors that can lead to the presence of destructive leaders within organizations. First, it may be that a destructive leader(s) already exists within an organization. Leaders may become destructive in an organization when they feel that their personal goals (i.e., promotion, finances, career) cannot be achieved in the organization using legitimate means. For example, failure to gain a promotion may result in frustration that causes a leader to engage in unethical or fraudulent activities. Similarly, a leader may become frustrated when

his or her personal goals are aligned with those of the organization, but achievement of those goals is thwarted by followers performing in unacceptable ways (i.e., incompetence, retaliation, playing politics). If this is the case, then this makes dealing with their behavior quite a complex process. While subordinates may be in agreement that their leader's behaviors have become more destructive over time, these very same leaders may be achieving good results and are perceived by higher managers as excellent performers. With the absence of an effective organizational communication system (such as a 360-degree feedback mechanism) upper managers are often unaware of the daily activities of their subordinate managers. All they are presented with is evidence of the leader's effectiveness by way of "bottom line results." It is also possible that many destructive leaders are able to achieve good performance results, at least in the short term, via impression management techniques targeted at their more senior manager. Again, this impression management process may be further enhanced by instilling fear in subordinates. The leader ensures that no contradictory information finds its way upward that jeopardizes the leader's own carefully scripted story of accomplishment.

Second, and related to the prevention of upward communication of issues, it seems to be a recurring theme that many incidents of destructive leadership are only brought to light by accident or via an internal whistle-blower. Enron Corporation's destructive leaders were only exposed after one employee became a whistle blower. The corruption charges involving FIFA leadership were only raised after a member of the leadership team agreed to wear a wire and record their conversations. In the case of Lance Armstrong, both competitors and members of cycling officialdom claimed that they were initially too intimidated by Armstrong to attempt to bring him to account. A further case in point is the example used at the beginning of this article. In this example, the U.S. military was not initially looking to expose bad leadership, rather it was seeking to understand the relatively high rate of suicide. It was only after analyzing the data that they realized destructive leadership was a contributing factor. Had feedback mechanisms been in place at an earlier point in time, could the problem have been identified and dealt with sooner? At present many organizations seem to lack the capacity and or will to identify and eradicate such leadership. This often leaves a fertile environment for destructive behaviors to continue and in many cases prosper.

Third and perhaps more worrying, it is frequently the case that a superior is aware of a destructive leader but does nothing about it. This may be due to the destructive leader achieving short-term goals. Alternatively, a situation can arise where a superior is blissfully unaware of what is happening under his or her watch and fails to act against destructive leadership out of sheer ignorance. Perhaps most distressing is the case where a superior exhibits many of the traits and behaviors of a destructive leader him or herself and has therefore either intentionally or inadvertently groomed another destructive leader.

What these contributing factors indicate is that destructive leadership often results from systemic issues rather than simply a small number of rogue individuals. In the case of the U.S. military, subsequent investigations and the removal of several individuals from their positions did indicate that there were a couple of "bad apples" causing issues. However,

it is systemic issues that are believed to have led to the development of such toxic leaders. The strong power relationships and hierarchical structures within the military promoted a culture that demanded respect, trust and loyalty toward the organization and superiors. This culture reduced the tendency by subordinates to identify and report problems with their leaders. There was also high turnover in personnel due to the military's involvement in a number of wars. Personnel were promoted too quickly to cover such turnover and leadership training for those new personnel was probably insufficient. Such dynamics seem conducive to the development of destructive leadership.

While the factors cited above specifically related to the U.S. military, such circumstances are not uncommon in other nonmilitary organizations. Simply by virtue of their position, leaders in most organizations possess greater formal power and authority than subordinates. Thus, there is always the potential for this power to be used in a destructive manner. However there is a saying that goes along the lines of "all that is necessary for evil to triumph is for good men to do nothing." It should not be surprising that this is often the case when subordinates ignore a leader's bad behavior in the early stages of their relationship with the leader. Leaders provide structure and certainty in organizations. They provide meaning and are often seen as causal to success and failure in most organizations. As such their somewhat exalted position is firmly entrenched. This makes it difficult for subordinates to raise questions about their immediate superior's behavior. In addition, subordinates who raise issues of leadership are likely to become pariahs in their organization. Even when taking advantage of legal whistle-blower status (via acts such as the Whistleblowers Protection Act, 2011, or the Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970), they are likely to seriously jeopardize their prospects for future employment. It is not surprising then that destructive leadership often gains momentum before being addressed. In the case of Lance Armstrong, 11 whistleblowers came forward only after his deception was uncovered.

In summary, destructive leadership might be the result of a few "bad apples." It might be the result of a few of those "bad apples" becoming frustrated at their ability to achieve their goals (both personal and organizational) via legitimate means. It might be the result of our somewhat romanticized notions of those formally labeled "leaders". It might be the result of subordinates more motivated by self-interest and preservation in the short term. As in the case of the U.S. military, it might also be the result of other organizational factors such as high turnover, lack of training, poor role modeling by senior management or a dysfunctional culture. In some circumstances it may be the result of a combination of all of the above. The problem is likely to be further compounded by the very public manner in which such cases come to light and the organizations' desire to avoid negative publicity.

WHAT ARE THE EFFECTS OF DESTRUCTIVE LEADERS ON ORGANIZATIONS?

Studies of destructive leadership have shown that there can be devastating effects on individuals, groups, teams, and organizations. The impact of destructive leaders on the individuals who work for them covers a variety of outcomes.

On a personal level, destructive leadership is likely to have a number of negative consequences. Subordinates may have more negative attitudes toward the leader. This can result in subordinates resisting the leader's attempts at influencing their work behaviors. Subordinates of destructive leaders may also have lower levels of job satisfaction, leading to an increased likelihood of an employee leaving the company. The high cost of replacing employees is well documented. Indeed, the U.S. Army estimates the cost of replacing one soldier at least $100,000 USD. This is without including the costs of any specialist training that might be required. Destructive leadership has also been associated with increased negative feelings such as anger, irritation or bitterness. Destructive leaders increase the level of psychological stress subordinates experience. This often leads to an overall decline in employee performance and wellbeing.

In addition to affecting subordinates' job performance, destructive leaders can also have a large impact on the wellbeing of employees outside the workplace. Such effects typically include stress related issues such as insomnia, bad dreams, general fatigue, and loss of concentration. Employees with destructive leaders often end up hating their job and dread going to work (thus increasing their intention to leave). They can feel disrespect for the people who hired them, which can then lead to an overall devaluing of their view of the organization. The victims of destructive leadership often feel depressed about their work life and have work consume all of their thoughts and private time. A common finding about destructive leadership is that such behavior negatively affects an employee's family relationships and activities as well as other personal relationships both within and outside of work.

Destructive leadership behaviors also have significant consequences for organizations as a whole and contribute to a variety of *human resource losses*. The presence of destructive leaders within an organization can negatively affect the organization's ability to attract and recruit high potential employees. Destructive leaders may also reduce the ability of an organization to develop the performance potential of its employees once hired. As already highlighted, destructive leadership can result in high turnover rates, with the accompanying costs of new recruitment. This climate diminishes employee performance as those employees who remain begin to spend their time job hunting and/or being absent from work. Its broadest impact may be that destructive leadership often results in a toxic organizational culture, with such toxic cultures then enhancing the likelihood of more destructive leaders.

Toxic cultures are often characterized by a lack of trust among colleagues. In addition, increased political behavior, cronyism and nepotism become the norm. Such behavior, by nature, is often directed at the accomplishment of self-serving, individual goals rather than goals that enhance the overall, long term profitability and sustainability of the organization. Is it any wonder then that the common emotion felt by workers in this environment is fear?

This climate of fear then leads to additional problems. Work unit instability, decreases in the level of work cohesion and performance occur in this type of climate. This is extremely problematic for organizations, especially because the modern business environment demands creativity and the development of new products and processes to insure long-term organizational success. Unfortunately, in cultures resulting

from a prevalence of destructive leadership, employees become more risk averse and fear making mistakes, since avoidance is preferable to punishment. Being willing to make mistakes is a key ingredient of the creative process and destructive leadership can drastically dampen the creative process so essential in the 21st century. In summary, destructive leadership is a serious cancer within any organization. It ruins the lives of employees and destroys their commitment to the organization and its objectives. It reduces the effectiveness of work groups. It leads to a toxic organizational culture that can spiral any firm into an ever-decreasing ability to meet the challenges of a competitive business environment.

WHAT CAN BE DONE ABOUT DESTRUCTIVE LEADERSHIP?

As with most forms of cancer, the best cure requires early detection and intervention. To do this, upper managers and those in the Human Resource areas within organizations need to become more adept at recognizing early dysfunctional behaviors in organizational leaders. However, these behaviors can be hard to decipher from normal leadership practices. Therefore, early detection of destructive leadership depends largely on the ability and willingness of senior management to identify and deal with destructive leaders. We suggest that there are 3 key stages where destructive leaders can be identified and dealt with.

First, those who are tasked with selecting new leaders need to be trained in how to identify destructive leadership traits. Screening for specific characteristics such as a narcissistic personality and tendencies toward destructive behaviors would be extremely helpful. Exercising care in the selection of both leaders and followers may help to ensure potential offenders never make it through the selection process. New employees (regardless of position) should also be trained in the skills of ethical decision-making and be introduced to behavior expectations via a code of conduct. This would send a clear message to all new employees, especially leaders, that "doing the right thing" and treating subordinates properly is expected.

Second, 360-degree feedback mechanisms such as that currently being utilized within the U.S. military can be employed to ensure employees are able to anonymously, and hence honestly, evaluate their superiors. Such feedback mechanisms may contribute to a culture of employee empowerment and collaboration by emphasizing leadership accountability, communication and feedback, and employee participation in the management process. This type of intervention would also enable senior management to identify destructive leadership that is occurring within the organization before it substantially and negatively influences individual, group and organizational outcomes. In order for this type of intervention to be successful, however, it is imperative that senior managers are both willing and able to take action when destructive leadership is identified. It is also necessary that employees have the skills to contribute effectively to the management development process. Therefore, skills training for human resource and upper management is necessary.

Additionally, in all companies it is imperative that senior managers consistently model and reward the type of constructive leadership that is expected. Suppose that a senior manager engages in destructive behavior. For that manager to effectively deal with a destructive subordinate manager would require the senior manager to admit his or her own personal failings. We know this is very difficult to do, and effective management of the subordinate manager would be unlikely.

Third, studies have shown that commonly in cases of bad leadership, employees perceive that nothing happens to those responsible for the destructive behaviors. Bizarrely, it seems some destructive leaders are even promoted! Therefore, senior management must be seen to be dealing with the issue. This is exactly what happened within the U.S. military when several such leaders were removed from their positions. The type of leadership and values expected in the organization should be explicitly stated. Regular job satisfaction and organizational climate surveys should be conducted to identify factors conducive to destructive leadership. In addition, organizations should have appropriate support mechanisms in place so that those who report destructive leadership at more senior levels are supported if they come forward. However, employees must not feel that the <u>only</u> way to deal with destructive leaders is to put their own careers on the line and act as whistleblowers. There must be a variety of checks and balances throughout the organization such as comprehensive hiring and training procedures, promotion of an ethical and collaborative culture, inclusive performance reviews, and a strong oversight by senior management. Overall, employees must see that senior managers are actively and consistently rooting out destructive leadership through a variety of means wherever it is found in the organization.

CONCLUSION

What is clear from our own and other research in the area is that destructive leadership is common, and dealing with destructive leaders is a difficult task. There are, however, a number of steps an organization can take to prevent, manage and hopefully eradicate this toxic style of leadership from their organizations. We believe that the best way to avoid instances of destructive leadership is for organizations to be selective in their hiring and promotion practices and to clearly state and model the positive leadership values and behaviors important to the organization. In addition, organizations should actively and consistently encourage a climate where employees feel free to voice issues that they may feel have contravened not only their own values but also those of the company. Once such issues have been raised, the onus is then on senior management to support those who raise the issue, and ensure that the issues are dealt with in an effective and timely manner.

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