

Eliminate Workplace Complaining

By Samantha Schilke; with excerpts from Fast Company, Tim Ferriss & Jon Gordon

Don't let negativity be a productivity killer in your workplace and foster a mindset of 'no complaining' in your personal and professional life.

In an article published by Fast Company, Buffer's cofounder defines their company-wide "No Complaining" Rule. He notes that there's a fine line between advocating for needed change and complaining to soothe your ego, and that a focus on avoiding complaints creates a happier and more positive environment. While any fool can criticize, condemn, and complain, only a person with character and self-control can regularly exhibit empathy and forgiveness. No complaining is not an excuse, however, to avoid speaking up about problems or issues.

Eckhart Tolle has a terrific exploration of complaining versus speaking up in the *Power of Now*:

"Complaining is not to be confused with informing someone of a mistake or deficiency so that it can be put right, and to refrain from complaining doesn't necessarily mean putting up with bad quality or behavior. There's no ego in telling the waiter that your soup is cold and needs to be heated up, if you stick to the facts, which are always neutral. "How dare you serve me cold soup!"—that's complaining. There's a "me" here that loves to feel personally offended by the cold soup and is going to make the most of it. A "me" that enjoys making someone wrong. The complaining we are talking about is in the service of the ego, not of change."

Tim Ferriss goes on to note that when you fix your words, you also fix your thoughts. In his article, Real Mind Control, he explains that even if you're not a negative person, there are places in your life where communication centers on complaints or criticism (most people commiserate for 30-40% of all conversation).

Tim Ferriss defines complaining for himself as *describing an event or person negatively without indicating next steps to fix the problem*, later on adding in common 4-letter words and profanity that serve as complaint qualifiers. This caused him to reword, forcing awareness and more precise thinking. Negativity can mean different things to different people, so take time to define what "complaining" means to you.

With his definition in mind, Ferriss was able to turn off negative events because he would work to create at least a tentative solution versus giving them an indefinite, mental shelf-life and was able to focus his thinking on solutions rather than problems. Take a leaf out of Tim's book – evaluate where your complaining lies and create action plans to avoid or shift your negative thinking. In general, people would much rather be around action-oriented problem-solvers than consistent, passive nay-sayers.

In a newsletter from last year, Jon Gordon creates an action plan for himself with a 7-day No Complaining Challenge. He replaces his complaints with appreciation in his challenge to bring more positivity to his life and his work. "One of the biggest threats to building a great team and organization is complaining. When we complain we focus on everything else but being our best."

Jon Gordon explains that we complain for two main reasons. We feel powerless and, for most people, it has turned into a habit. He broke this trend with a focus on creating a life he wanted and noted that if you are complaining, you're not leading. Read on for five action items to utilize instead of complaining:

- 1. Practice Gratitude.** If you are focusing on gratitude, negativity no longer exists. It's also a great tool to energize and engage your coworkers and employees by consistently telling them how grateful you are for them and their work.
- 2. Praise Others.** Focus on what people are doing right around you instead of only seeing (and complaining) about what others do wrong.
- 3. Focus on Success.** Start a success journal and each night before you go to bed, write down the one great thing about your day.
- 4. Let Go.** Keep focus on the things in your control to change and let go of the things that are beyond your reach.
- 5. Pray.** Scientific research now shows that daily prayer reduces stress; boosts positive energy; and promotes health, vitality, and longevity.