

Are employee-victims destroying your business?

Dismantling the Victim/Rescuer/Persecutor triangle in your company

Most of our employees secretly wish to be taken care of; otherwise, they would probably work for themselves. Their desire to have others take responsibility has led to numerous problems in work efficiency and a poor bottom line for many companies.

This relinquishing of power has decreased workers' self-esteem. Most of our employees act like victims. They give away their power eagerly to avoid responsibility.

Every victim seeks two other partners to help him or her in this disenfranchisement. They are the Persecutor and the Rescuer.

Gossip is the most blatant form of this disenfranchisement that occurs in the workplace. What is gossip? It is two people talking about a third person because neither of them has enough courage to tell the third party what they think. All of us will avoid direct conflict at any cost. Such "safe" communication costs companies millions of dollars annually.

Team development offers a unique opportunity for companies to deal with conflict directly, thus increasing worker satisfaction and productivity, and, ultimately, creating a more profitable bottom line.

Victor Victim was a sales manager for a national beauty supply company. His entry into our team-development training program was characterized by sarcastic remarks to the team facilitator and other members of his team. Victor was critical of senior-level management.

Victor was particularly concerned over what he felt were their low IQs, questions of the legitimacy of their births and last and least importantly, their general ineffective running of the business. The company had recently gone through a downsizing. Morale was low. Those left felt guilty for having their jobs, yet were angry at senior management for the firings. However, no one could openly express any anger over the firings.

When confronted in the team about his sarcastic remarks, Victor revealed his own sense of fear and powerlessness over the recent downsizing as well as his concern for having expended his annual budget with four months still remaining in the current fiscal year.

Thus, Victor sought out other team members (Rescuer) to remove him from his budgetary blunder by characterizing senior-level management as a bad guy (Persecutor). If Victor succeeds, low morale and poor productivity continue in the company. Victor doesn't deal with the real problem—his budget—which is the root of

his sense of powerlessness.

The Victim/Rescuer/Persecutor triangle is always at work in your company. Employees unknowingly keep this mechanism going by refusing to deal directly with others. They would rather put the responsibility for their actions elsewhere.

Be constantly on the lookout for these roles being played out in your organization. If not stopped, they could destroy your company. The key to identifying these three roles is the sense of powerlessness that is both their root and their result. You'll know you're role-free when your employees' actions are solving—not avoiding—problems, they report increased job satisfaction

and, most importantly, when improved productivity and profitability result. **SBM**



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Alan Ethan Dezen, principal of Corporate Performance Consultants, has 25 years of experience providing goal-based behavioral change to groups and teams. Direct your comments and questions to him at (412) 244-1716.

