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# Knowledge Is Power – Why Not Communicating Can be Dangerous

We have all worked with people who, for a variety of reasons, believe that they can empire build and carry influence over others if they gather but do not disseminate information. This type of behaviour can start out as seemingly getting the edge over colleagues, believing that knowledge is power. The problem is that this behaviour can, if not challenged, escalate into a potentially serious and damaging situation, which threatens staff morale, and can in some cases lead to a regulator's door.

The person in question is often respected and perceived by the management to be an asset to the business. As the problem grows, there are a number of reasons why management justify their reasons for not tackling the situation before it gets out of control, especially as they wish to avoid confrontation with a valued employee. Where the result of the behaviour leads to inadequate record keeping in breach of company policy – 'Oh, it's all in my head', being one often used-excuse, this can result in a massive knowledge gap especially if the employee leaves. The behaviour can lead to a breakdown in communication between teams that should be cooperating, for example legal and compliance, whose individual functions should be complementary, and problems not being reported to the appropriate people. If not dealt with the empire can become the seat of a major business or regulatory disaster.

We have all heard the excuse that 'So-and-so is just like that' when their behaviour towards those who are perceived as moving into the employee's territory becomes rude and aggressive. We have all seen damage to staff morale when management refuses to confront the behaviour. The consequences of people believing that their working practices are above criticism and failing to share ideas so that they do not receive appropriate scrutiny can be harmful to the business. What started out as innocent risks becoming a centre for concealment and maybe worse. The real risk is that it may take a crisis to bring matters to a head, which we have seen in a number of instances.

So often we are told that a problem is believed to exist but that nothing has been done about it. The answer to that is in good governance. It costs very little time and money to instigate a review, and to ascertain that there is no real threat to the business. It is good management to call out bad behaviours and to nip them in the bud before they become serious. Should something more significant come to light then maybe an external consultant experienced in governance can help as an independent person to carry out a review and identify any serious matters and advise on what action to take to restore situation.

If matters are not addressed early then the situation may become very much more complex and expensive. We have seen some distressing examples of this over the years.



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