ABRASIVE LEADER DIAGNOSTIC™

Results & Recommendations

January 18, 2023 at 12:49:36 PM
Introduction

Abrasive leaders rub their coworkers the wrong way. Their words and actions create interpersonal friction that grates on coworkers, eroding employee motivation and organizational productivity. Abrasive behaviors range on a continuum from mildly wounding to severely disruptive.

What defines abrasive behavior?

- Any interpersonal behavior that causes emotional distress in coworkers sufficient to disrupt organizational functioning.
- Behavior characterized by interpersonal interactions that are perceived to be disrespectful.
- Another term for abrasive behavior is unacceptable conduct.

The consequences of abrasive behavior runs on a continuum from barely impacting team performance all the way to organizational failure on the far end of the spectrum. Most people that have taken the step of diagnosis are experiencing some sort of disruption in their organization and either directly or indirectly have learned about behavior that is negatively impacting the organization.

The objective of this diagnostic is to deliver a confidential report to you identifying whether or not the leader you assessed has an abrasive style. Additionally, recommendations are made for your specific circumstances. You, the organization, and the leader are never identified in any way in this report.

Whether you are an HR Director, the leader's manager, the leader, or a co-worker, this report is designed to give you a single diagnostic result along with a list of the answers you provided. The questionnaire you responded to calculated the results based on widely accepted identifiers of an abrasive style.

The following results should not be used as the sole source of data for further action. Detailed and documented information, based on direct or reported observations of the individual's interpersonal interactions, should also be included as part of your final determination.

For support in further diagnosis we suggest you ask for assistance from a trusted/experienced source within your organization, the Boss Whispering Institute, or a member of the Boss Whispering Institute. The complete list of the characteristics of an abrasive leader, and the symptoms organizations experience, can be found at the end of this report.

Additional Recommended Reading:
"Winners Who Become Losers: Abrasive Leaders" - David Wright & Laura Crawshaw. A chapter from No Winner Ever Got There Without a Coach. For employers and managers who are anxious about how to phrase intervention and want to learn why and how to intervene. Easy-to-read interview format and can be especially valuable for resistant upper managers HR may be trying to motivate.

This diagnostic instrument is a co-creation of Resologics and The Boss Whispering Institute.
Abrasive Leader Diagnostic™ (potential results)

- **NO**
  The leader you assessed does not have an abrasive leadership style.

- **MAYBE**
  Your responses indicate that the leader has engaged in abrasive behavior, but it has not yet become an ongoing pattern of leadership.

- **YES**
  The leader you assessed has an abrasive leadership style. Intervention is recommended.

**YOUR RESULTS**
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- **YES**
  Your responses indicate an abrasive leadership style.
RESULTS:

Your responses (shown below) indicate an abrasive leadership style.

This result should not be used as the sole source of data for further action. Detailed and documented information, based on direct or reported observations of the individual's interpersonal interactions, should also be included as part of your final determination.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Diagnostic Question</th>
<th>Your Responses</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Which of the following most closely describes your relationship with the leader?</td>
<td>I work for, or with, the leader I am assessing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Which of the following abrasive behaviors have you observed, or have been reported to you?</td>
<td>Shouting, Name-calling, Intentionally ignoring or excluding others, Public humiliation, Condescension / Claims intellectual superiority, Sarcasm: hostile humor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Which of the following symptoms of abrasive leadership do you have knowledge of?</td>
<td>Complaints regarding the individual's interactions with coworkers, customers, contractors, patients, students, etc., Attempts by employees to transfer out of the leader's area or avoid being transferred in, Covert cautions to coworkers: “Watch out for him- don't get in his way”, or “Don't get on her bad side – you'll pay if you do”, Attrition of valued employees from the leader's area, Potential or actual harassment/hostile environment litigation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Which of the following statements best describes your experience with the leader and their behaviors. This can include your direct observations and/or information from others (indirect perceptions).</td>
<td>I am aware of recurring instances of abrasive behavior by the leader.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Remember:

- Abrasive behavior is any interpersonal behavior that causes emotional distress in coworkers sufficient to disrupt organizational functioning.
- Abrasive behavior is characterized by interpersonal interactions that are perceived to be disrespectful.
- Another term for abrasive behavior is unacceptable conduct.
- Abrasive behavior can range on a continuum from mildly irritating to severely disruptive.

Individuals may display abrasive behavior on a single occasion because of unusual stress. Even so, a single instance may cause interpersonal wounds and disrupt organizational functioning.

RECOMMENDATIONS:
No matter what the diagnostic result is, the fact that you are assessing here with this tool points to the idea that you may want to seek advice beyond this diagnostic tool. A diagnostic result of “YES” makes it a certainty that you should consult with a professional about the behavior you or others are experiencing. Following your organizations procedures for issues like this are often a good first step. If there are no procedures defined, having a conversation with HR, the Ombuds, your EAP, or even a co-worker may help you think through next steps. Outside support in the form of coaches, counselors, ombuds, whistle blowers hotlines, mediators, and even attorneys could be appropriate as well.

If you are like many others, there are a variety of reasons for not speaking up when experiencing abrasive behavior. Fear of retribution, fear of being the troublemaker, fear that you may be the problem and not the leader, and fear of losing your job are among the common reasons for not acting. There are many others. So why would anyone in your position do anything to try and make change? Because, if you work for an abrasive boss, over time you can be negatively impacted personally in many ways.

Consider the following questions, then talk with someone you trust about the up and downsides of your options.

- No matter what the diagnosis is for the leader, is there something else that could be going on besides an abrasive style? What? How can you learn more about that?
- What are three things you have to lose by speaking up?
- What would change in your life if the behavior you are experiencing changed?
- What are the two changes in behavior you would most like to see?
- Is there any danger of physical harm to you or others in this situation?
- Do you have safe access to someone in your organization who has the power to make change?
- If you ask for it, can you be assured that anyone you talk with will maintain your confidentiality?
- If you don’t see a path or procedure to making a complaint or requesting change, what is your best alternative to help yourself?
- What is your next step? When will you take that step by?

If you would like to talk further about your observations, please feel free to make contact.

I stand ready to help. Contact me to arrange a confidential consultation at no cost:

Mark Batson Baril | Resologics
www.resologics.com | mark@resologics.com | +1 510.314.8314
Addendum 1
Characteristics and Symptoms of Abrasive Leadership
(credit to and please see The Boss Whispering Institute for more information)

Typical symptoms of abrasive leadership:

- Complaints regarding the individual’s interactions with coworkers, customers, contractors, patients, students, etc.
- Attempts by employees to transfer out of the leader’s department or avoid being transferred in
- Covert cautions: “Watch out for him- don't get in his way”, or “Don't get on her bad side – you'll pay if you do.”
- Attrition of valued employees
- Decreased morale and motivation
- Potential or actual harassment litigation
- Excessive managerial time devoted to addressing employee distress
- Loss of leadership credibility: failure to intervene is interpreted by employees as weakness, or worse, tacitly condoning the behavior(s)

Examples of abrasive behavior:

- Shouting
- Swearing at others
- Name-calling
- Gossiping
- Intimidation: glaring, snorting, etc.
- Intentionally ignoring or excluding others
- Publicly criticizing others
- Maligning another’s character/reputation
- Failing to maintain confidentiality
- Condescension / Claims intellectual superiority
- Over-control/micromanagement
- Withholding of Information
- Chronic lateness
- Failing to keep agreements
- Sarcasm: hostile humor
- Inappropriate sexual comments or behaviors
- Making threats
- Abruptly walking out of meetings
- Throwing objects
- Hitting objects
- Hitting people

Additional criteria for determining if behavior is abrasive/unacceptable:

- Would you want your partner, sibling, or child to be subjected to this behavior?
- Are the negative perceptions about this individual's behavior disrupting organizational functioning?
- Is it in the abrasive individual's best interest to be perceived this way?
- Is it in the organization's best interest to ignore these perceptions?
Questions Leaders can self-diagnose abrasive behavior from:

- Do employees attempt to transfer out of your department or avoid transferring into it?
- Have your coworkers given you a nickname? Does it refer to a dangerous animal, e.g. “Pit Bull”, “Wildebeest”, “Tyrannosaurus”, etc.?
- Have you ever been asked to:
  - improve your communication skills?
  - control your temper?
  - learn to get along with others? “not get so worked up”?, “cool it” or “lighten up”?
  - be more patient with others?
  - not push others so hard?
  - Have you been passed over for a promotion? and can’t get anyone in administration to give specifics on why? because of your people management skills?
- Do you find yourself in intense confrontations with management, peers, employees, or Human Resources?
- Have complaints been brought against you for inappropriate conduct, such as harassment, hostile treatment, or discrimination?
- Do you have enemies at work?
- Are there people that refuse to work with you, or that you refuse to work with?
- Do people work hard to phrase sentences very carefully so as not to offend you?
- Do you often find yourself impatient with coworkers?
- Have you received low scores for team building, participative management, or other so-called “soft skills” on a 360° management skills assessment?

Do you engage in any of the following behaviors at work?

- Publicly criticizing others
- Hostile joking/teasing
- Shouting
- Swearing at others
- Temper outbursts
- Abruptly walking out of meetings
- Slamming doors, throwing objects
- Intentionally ignoring others
- Name calling
- Nonverbal criticism (rolling eyeballs, snickering, etc.)
- Failing to keep agreements