

3 Ways Cheating Can Find Its Way into Your Business

 farm-equipment.com/articles/13409-ways-cheating-can-find-its-way-into-your-business

When the news came out that Volkswagen was cheating on emissions tests, you might have shaken your head and wondered how a company gets into a place like that, writes Joel Garfinkle in an [article for SmartBrief](#).

Was everyone in on the cheating? Probably not — at least not directly. But everyone in the company bears responsibility, and here's why: A culture where lies and deception seem like viable options doesn't just spring up overnight. It's developed over time, and not by anyone saying "go ahead and cheat on that test" — not really.

Such a culture is created when the consequences for being truthful seem worse than sweeping something under the rug. Take a look at these 3 habits and see if any of them might be breeding a similar culture of dishonesty and circumventing the rules in your organization.

1. Discourage Communication

Garfinkle says, the less people communicate — with their colleagues, with their managers and with executives — the easier it is for problems to fester and issues to grow unnoticed. When you build an open culture where the team is free to discuss their work, they tend to catch small issues and come up with solutions before the problem really has a chance to develop. When open dialogue is the norm, everyone feels free to brainstorm and troubleshoot ad hoc. Sometimes leaders can have an ingenious solution, sometimes it might be a junior member of the team.

He suggests that if the norm in your organization is heads-down, keep-to-yourself isolation, you might have the right environment for small problems to become big ones when they really shouldn't have.

2. Kill the Messenger

The next habit relates to what happens in your company when someone brings forward an issue? If the first instinct — whether it's yours or on other levels in the organization — is to punish the person who spoke up, it's not a welcoming environment in which to seek help. Lower-ranking or newer team members may feel they shouldn't speak up, if they don't know as much, even when they see a problem.

Garfinkle says this leaves team members with two choices: try to solve the problem themselves, which isn't always possible or appropriate, or simply keep silent. Either avenue could lead to issues going unresolved. Worse, in the case of Volkswagen, there emerged a workaround worse than the problem itself.

3. Assign Blame

Finally, when problems are found and addressed, sometimes the "post-mortem" or "root-cause analysis" in the aftermath can focus more on who was at fault than on how to better mitigate or avoid an issue altogether next time. Blaming is dangerous. I can feel a little like a solution, providing some short-term satisfaction or vindication and giving the sense that the problem has been solved by censuring one or more individuals. If they don't do a certain thing again, or "shape up," there won't be any more problems.

Objectively, we know this is rarely true — problems are almost never that simple — and simply blaming someone and moving on robs the rest of the team of opportunities to learn from mistakes. Sometimes, blame is divisive and encourages your best resources to seek greener pastures. Blame sends the message that it's "each one for themselves" and damages the sense of togetherness needed for great teamwork. When there's a risk of being blamed, team members are focused on watching their own backs rather than working together.

Do these things happen in your organization? Is there a danger of creating a dishonest or secretive culture in your ranks? What do you do to foster open, honest addressing of problems in your company? A workplace that allows problems to be solved in the open, with all your best minds, benefits everyone.