

Are Your Co-Workers Annoying — Or Downright Toxic?

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When experiencing annoying behavior from a co-worker, only 12% report the behavior to a manager or HR, a new survey showed.



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When I worked at my first full-time journalism job, fresh out of college, I offered to drive a new co-worker to the office after his car broke down. During the short drive to the newsroom, we made small talk about the stories we were working on or were excited about pursuing.

Enter the weekly editorial meeting. This co-worker proceeded to pitch my stories as though they were his own. In hindsight, I'd like to say he felt insecure in a new job and wanted to make a good impression with the bosses. At the time, I didn't feel as generous.

A recent Kickresume survey of nearly 3,000 employees found that 85% have dealt with an annoying co-worker. Of those, 33% identified the credit stealer as the most egregious.

“Credit stealers simply undermine team spirit and create an environment where people feel undervalued. This behavior not only annoys co-workers but can also create a toxic work environment where nobody feels safe to share innovative ideas,” per the report.

The credit stealer was followed by the micromanager (32%), chronic complainer (30%), personal space intruder (30%) and lunch thief (27%) as the most irksome. The least annoying (of the annoying co-workers) were the “tech illiterate,” late arrivers and those who show up to work sick, respondents said.

In response to annoying behavior, 32% of workers said they try to avoid the colleague in question, while others directly ask the person to change their behavior, ignore the issue, vent to co-workers or become passive aggressive. Only 12% report the behavior to a manager or HR.

“The tendency to avoid direct confrontation shows a possible gap in communication training and conflict resolution resources in today’s workplaces” Peter Ďuriš, CEO at Kickresume, said in a statement. “By addressing these gaps, companies could boost individual well-being and create a more supportive work environment.”

Of those surveyed, just 13% reported that annoying behavior had little to no impact on their performance, while the rest admitted that they were moderately or significantly affected.

Kickresume offers some tips for HR on how to address the problem.

- Make sure employees feel valued and respected to create a positive work environment.
- Improve communication and conflict resolution techniques for in-person and remote work. That could include regular check-ins and guidelines and training for virtual interactions and remote work.
- Foster a culture where open dialogue is expected to engender honest communication.
- Provide professional coaching to problematic workers to help them understand and adjust their behavior.

I’ll add one more for employees directly: If you’re driving a colleague to work, declare your car a work-free environment and just play music or a podcast and disassociate on the way to the office like the rest of us.