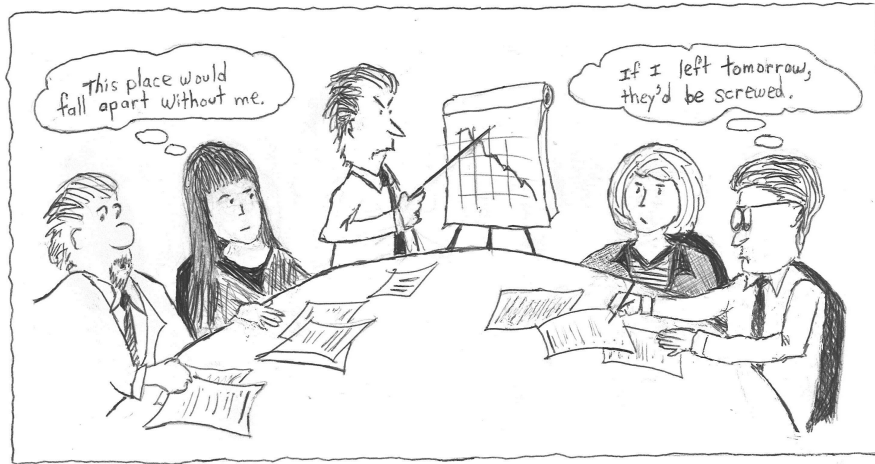


# 50 shades of a dysfunctional workplace



**Shade 1:** Your employee handbook was created 10 years ago by a long-gone receptionist who couldn't spell well.

**Shade 2:** Most employees are unsure where the bulk of the company's revenue comes from. Or worse, they don't care.

**Shade 3:** Mandatory meetings are optional, depending on who you are.

**Shade 4:** A group lunch lasts 2 hours, 45 minutes and two or more employees don't even come back to work at all.

**Shade 5:** The boss rewards all underperformers with less work.

**Shade 6:** The underperformers' work gets shifted to hard workers.

**Shade 7:** You're losing hard workers at an uncanny rate. You don't know why.

**Shade 8:** The company's mission statement is professionally painted on the conference room wall, but not one employee could recite it without looking at it.

**Shade 9:** The few who do look at it are not really sure what it means.

**Shade 10:** Your "catch a co-worker going above and beyond" program fizzles in a week.

**Shade 11:** The boss goes on a two-week vacation and the staff learns about it through the grapevine.

**Shade 12:** Attendance becomes optional because of Shade 11.

**Shade 13:** There's an unwritten rule that says certain male employees are not to mentor young female interns.

**Shade 14:** Your Halloween party has a "sexiest costume" category.

**Shade 15:** George in accounting won it.

**Shade 16:** Employees seemed to be taking copious notes on their smartphones during a PowerPoint presentation, but few could give you any details about it later.

**Shade 17:** Somebody *really* is eating the broken halves of doughnuts.

**Shade 18:** An all-staff email that says "Pizza in the breakroom" means it's cold and left over from another department's long meeting.

**Shade 19:** There's a mad dash to the breakroom.

**Shade 20:** No one knows where the key is to the lock on the suggestion box.

**Shade 21:** "We have a suggestion box?"

**Shade 22:** Your office swear jar has a sign above it that says "F-bombs \$1, all other curses 50 cents." It doesn't reduce the crusty language, but it keeps the Keurig machine supplied.

**Shade 23:** Your “Employee of the Month” award goes to Jack, for his ability to shake the hung-up Cheetos bags out of the breakroom vending machine.

**Shade 24:** When employees hit age 50, they get treated to a birthday bash with a sheet cake that says “Over the Hill” in shiny blue icing. A Spencer’s gag gift tops it off.

**Shade 25:** For the employees the boss likes, their annual goals are calibrated down to their skill levels.

**Shade 26:** For the employees the boss doesn’t like, the goals are calibrated beyond their skill levels.

**Shade 27:** The front desk is out of expense account forms and mileage sheets.

**Shade 28:** But not so when it comes to duck sauce and soy packets.

**Shade 29:** A one-hour meeting produces nothing but the need for another one-hour meeting next week.

**Shade 30:** The boss either hears a legitimate complaint or a whine, depending not on *what* was said, but *who* said it.

**Shade 31:** Customers and clients are seen as nuisances (see Shade 2).

**Shade 32:** No one has defined flex time, so everything is a free-for-all in comings and goings.

**Shade 33:** Employees’ laughs and jokes are at the boss’s expense, behind her back of course.

**Shade 34:** Romance and infidelity are rife, and there’s a code of honor among employees; they all know what to tell a person who phones in asking about his or her significant other.

**Shade 35:** Employees all chip in for a pile of Lotto tickets, and the boss is in, too.

**Shade 36:** The boss sees someone with a different opinion as having a bad attitude.

**Shade 37:** He’s right about the bad attitude, but the different opinion has nothing to do with it.

**Shade 38:** Workers shun the products or services they produce. “*I can’t see why anyone would buy this stuff.*”

**Shade 39:** Collaboration is almost nonexistent. Employees are quiet, introverted and sullen. Time for a morale-boosting game.

**Shade 40:** Morale-boosting games produce groans. Scrap them.

**Shade 41:** Weird things in the breakroom fridge, and employees put their names on them, as if someone is going to take Mike B.’s half-eaten tub of week-old chili by mistake ... or on purpose.

**Shade 42:** Workers lobby for a dress-down Friday, when they never really dressed up much Monday through Thursday.

**Shade 43:** Power outage longer than 40 minutes? We’re out of here. For the rest of the day.

**Shade 44:** Boss starts telecommuting on Fridays. Soon, Mondays too.

**Shade 45:** Every employee believes the place can’t function without them.

**Shade 46:** The boss sometimes wonders how the place is functioning *with* them.

**Shade 47:** The required federal and state labor law posters are covered up with a softball sign-up sheet, a Girl Scout Cookie form, a “free kittens to a good home” notice and an unclaimed winter mitten.

**Shade 48:** Employees are acutely aware of the time their co-workers arrive in the morning, take lunch and return, and leave at the end of the day.

**Shade 49:** They’re also aware of how long it takes a teleworker to respond to an email (more than 20 minutes? Then you must be goofing off).

**Shade 50:** When the boss says the new hire is a good fit, it’s code for, “He’s just as weird as you people.”

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