

Tackle grumbling head-on with organized gripe session

It can start as one employee simply venting frustration. Then another joins in. Eventually, morale and productivity take a hit from all the rumor, gossip and negative words bouncing around the office or department.

How can you put a stop to it? Hold a gripe session—an organized forum to allow employees to vent.

It's best if an HR person moderates such events. Consider inviting only rank-and-file workers so they won't feel afraid of their boss's reaction to a comment. Here are more tips:

- 1. Ask questions.** Pose questions that uncover their concerns and gripes. Tell them their input will be seen as positive, as long as their words are productive and results-oriented.
- 2. Post input on a flip chart,** and ask the group to vote on items that are most troubling.
- 3. Say nothing during the session.** Only pose clarifying questions. Collect the anonymous comments and pass them along to the relevant boss (CEO, department supervisor, etc.).
- 4. Invoke a 48-hour promise.** Tell the workers that you and/or the boss "will be in this room 48 hours from now with a response to the issues you've raised."
- 5. In 48 hours, acknowledge their points,** clear up any misunderstandings, identify issues that warrant attention and use the group to search for solutions, where possible.