Ways to accentuate the positive and eliminate the negative

Top tips on how to rid the world of neg ferrets and energy vampires

We heard the phrase "toxic energy vampires" being used by one of our peers when discussing just how devasting the impact of having one negative person in a group situation is. Just as Henry Fonda in "12 angry men" managed to change the views of his fellow jurors, one negative person can change the entire dynamic, mood and effectiveness of a group or project. So what can you do about this? We asked Carol Craig from the Centre for Confidence and Wellbeing for some tips on dealing with negativity in the workplace. Here goes.

Dealing with constant negativity at work can be dispiriting. We're affected by people's negative feelings. If there's a lot of moaning even the sunniest person can feel affected.

Recent research suggests that negative feelings consume our attention and are more powerful that positive ones. Indeed to keep an atmosphere positive at work there needs to be three times more positive, than negative, exchanges between staff.

The mistake people often making in wanting to create a more positive work environment is to try to demonise and outlaw negativity. This is unlikely to be effective. Damning the flow might seem the best course of action but it often intensifies it.

Instead it is best to concentrate your efforts on facilitating the expression of more positive opinions and feelings. For example:

• Suggest starting team meetings with everyone saying what has gone well since the last meeting. This may seem artificial and awkward at first for those who aren't used to being positive but if you persevere then they too may get into the habit of looking for small things which they can be positive about.

• When looking to improve performance rather than only analysing what's going wrong and trying to fix it, see if you can identify what's working and build on that.

• Recognise and celebrate success. If you are a manager make sure you give positive feedback. Many employees complain that they don't get enough attention for doing the job well and so feel taken for granted. When things are going well for the team talk about it and mark it in some way. Small rituals like a special tea party, or a drink after work, can even make a difference.

All of this may seem a bit much for staff with a proclivity to be pessimistic and negative but it is worth persevering: positive emotion is also catching.

Check out www.centreforconfidence.co.uk

Our friends at Cragrats, who help us with the theatrical element of our touring workshops suggested that we pick up a copy of "Polar Bear Pirates" which sheds

some light on how to deal with all sorts of difficult individuals on the road to success (the likes of neg ferrets, sinkers and bloaters!). We're off to purchase our copy now.