

## PAY ATTENTION TO BULLYING AT THE WORKPLACE: IT IS NOT SO TRIFLING AS YOU THINK



Workplace bullying is a grim matter that is not taken too seriously by many employers who normally brush it off as a personal matter between co-workers. Employers will be well advised that it could have serious repercussions for your business and cost your company big in terms of time, finance and legal botherations. Moreover, the employee who is at the receiving end, one can only be bullied if you are weak and cannot retaliate, may feel that the management is not interested in helping him, making him all the more vulnerable and may decide to leave. Mind you only those ones will leave who are good at their work and know they will find jobs elsewhere. Those who cannot leave, even if they want to, may live in mortal fear for their lives, will curtail their work productivity and may even develop health problems. In case of death, you'll really find yourself in hot soup that could cause you tens of thousands of dollars – and all because you thought it was none of your business. Many employers' ostrich-like believe bullying occurs in other workplaces and cannot happen at their workplace. Well, a study by CareerBuilder may make them think again. The study, conducted earlier this year reports that bullying at the workplace is on the mounting. Why most employers, mistakenly believe that there place are bully-free, is most cases go unreported, the bullied are fearful that the workplace-bully will harass them more if he is reported. Almost 60 percent of the bullied said they did not report the matter to the higher-ups. More than a quarter of those who said they had reported, said nothing was done about it, further emboldening the intimidator. Many say that they do not report because the oppression comes from the boss, obviously there's little you can do about that. Others say they are bullied by customers. Reporting against them could mean loss of business for the company, which the bosses would be loathe to accept. For obvious reasons, workers are fearful of reporting bullies. But you are responsible for their safety, so be their eyes and ears and look out for such cases and address them before they get out of hand. 8 percent more employees than last year said they were bullied at work. 17 percent said that they quit their jobs because they couldn't take the bullying any more. 16 percent said they led fearful lives and developed ailments that could be linked to the workplace bullying. Bullying may not be physical and can be hard to identify. Only the bullied know what it feels like to be bullied. If the boss your supervisor deliberately neglects you and does not acknowledge your work, that's bullying. Favoring one worker and leaving out one from outings, meetings and other joint gatherings is also bullying. As bullying is so subjective and personal, employers may be forgiven for believing that it's hard to protect the workplace against it, but there are some measures you could and should put in place. Start by developing an all-encompassing grievance policy for your business that enumerates very clearly what an employee should do if they have any problem with any other employee or anyone else at the workplace. If employees approach you, don't treat the matter lightly. Consider it seriously. Talk to both the affected people and if necessary, initiate internal investigations. Get both aggrieved parties together and see if a mood can be created where both can work in an environment of cooperation and mutual understanding. If need be and the bully is not responding to corrective methods, gather as much proof of his misdoings and give him the sack. Even if he takes you to court, the evidence will be heavily stacked against him.