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SMALL BUSINESS TIP OF THE DAY

Jerks At Work

By [Lauren Simonds](#) | Sept. 05, 2013 | [18 Comments](#)

Is your workplace a jerkplace? Author and management consultant Ken Lloyd offers tips on dealing with office idiots.

Television sitcoms are prime real estate for people behaving badly, especially at work. But the abrasive behavior, gossipy cliques, department rivalries and practical jokes that make you laugh during prime time aren't nearly as amusing when you're working nine to five.

In the real world, a real jerk can cause real damage. These types of behaviors erode morale and destroy productivity in the workplace. They foment dissent and can lead to lawsuits. No bottom-line happiness there.

Ken Lloyd, a management consultant and the author of "Office Idiots: What to Do When Your Workplace is a Jerkplace," says the biggest offenders are "office idiots who don't recognize the value of diversity," and the creativity that it brings to a business.

In an article on [Small Business Computing](#), Lloyd offers ways to combat idiot behaviors in a business setting. Here are a few of his suggestions to help keep your workplace focused and productive.

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The simple truth is that office idiots won't go away by themselves. You need to challenge the behavior and take action. A positive outcome really depends on your approach: no one wants to create an explosive situation. When you focus on an offender's behavior and performance, rather than on personality traits, you're more likely to diffuse a tense situation, sidestep defensiveness and resolve matters professionally.

Ask yourself whether you actually encourage office idiocy. That may seem ridiculous on the face of things, but you could be enabling these behaviors unwittingly. For example, do you ever

- let the office chatterbox monopolize your time and attention
- complete a coworker's assignment at the expense of your own to-do list

Every time you let this (or something similar) happen, you reward the behavior. It's time to speak up and act assertively.

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The next step in fostering a jerk-free work place is to put an end to the myth of multitasking. Your multitasking colleagues, the ones with their heads buried in their smartphones during meetings, they aren't listening to you—or anyone else for that matter. Reduce office friction, restore focus and improve office interactions by banning multitasking.

Email is a tricky medium for communication, and people can easily misconstrue the meaning in your message. Using it for facts and figures is fine, but don't count on it for anything that requires emotion or nuance. And it makes an especially lousy platform for arguments. If you notice tensions rising in an email thread, go talk to the people face-to-face or at the very least, make a phone call to sort things out.

Finally, take a long look in the mirror to make sure that you're not an office idiot. Honestly assess how you treat your co-workers and employees—do you do so with respect and trust? If you find areas that could stand improving, active listening can help you improve your interpersonal communications.

Lauren Simonds is the managing editor of Small Business Computing. [Follow Lauren on Twitter.](#)

Adapted from [5 Tips for Dealing with Toxic Workplaces](#), by Pedro Hernandez at *Small Business Computing*. [Follow Small Business Computing on Twitter.](#)

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