



WORKPLACE COMPETITION

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Introduction



The FEELING of Competing

Humans compete for status, income, promotions, and other scarce goods. That **intrinsic competitive drive** is felt by everyone, as we all could probably name that one person we recognize as '**over competitive**.' Without thinking about the workplace, many people like to think about sports or even something like video games or a local contest. Why do people enjoy these types of competition?

Why Compete? Winning.

People love to win and with competition it allows them to **satisfy the need** to win. With this however, there is the responsibility of knowing **when** you're competing to **thrive with the team** & when you're competing for **YOU to win**. We found through our interviews that people tend to equate the two (from the members point POV) when gauging this. This begs the question: is competition in the workplace a good thing or a bad thing? The workplace, for most people, is a rather sensitive topic where they need to constantly be updated on the best solutions & showcase application of critical thinking, or they risk being replaced. What **effects** does this have on the worker's mind though?

Well, it Depends...



Competition can make employees excited. They can look forward to working or even better, they can produce more efficient work. But competition can have negative effects on employees as well. This can eventually cause production to fall. We will work to establish these pros & cons, while gauging the necessity for competition through our interviews.

Why does competition occur?

As a Necessity

We concluded that Workplace Competition is a **functionality** of our capitalist society. Canadian Economist Jim Stanford describes this perfectly, through stating that "Competition-ruthless, unforgiving, to-the-death competition-is a **crucial feature** of capitalism."

As a Tool

There are a few reasons why some believe that it is a good idea. One of them being that individuals are **naturally competitive**, this increases productivity.

The implementation of contests in the workplace is frequently materialized with a prize. We observe through our interviews that some people may take this environment more seriously than others, something that has its own observable pros & cons that we will discuss shortly.

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SOCIAL PROOF

This is rooted from the idea of Social Proof, described as "the tendency for humans in a group, to emulate the behaviors of the groups' more successful members(1)."

What you should know about Competition in the workplace

Competition has both its ups and its downs. But it all depends on how employers handle it. Competition can spur innovation and creativity. For a workplace, that can be great. What boss does not want their employees to be creative and be hard working. But one thing to keep in mind is that competition can affect team members differently. Not everyone likes competition however. So you need to make sure to provide motivation to team members. But what team leaders need to know is competition can turn very fast and it can change the outcome of work performance. Also mentioned is improving employee performance and how it requires an environment of trust. This is important because if your boss wants to talk to you about performance and you don't trust them it is not good. You want to make sure that they will try and help you and not just tell everyone else, making the employee feel uncomfortable. One important thing with competition is being fair. If someone is getting more information or a "handout" while the other employees are fighting, this can also cause problems in the workspace. You need to make sure everyone is being treated fairly. (Dublino 1)

What you should know about Competition in the workplace: Mixed Motives

"The essence of teamwork is the cooperative interactions of team members. Yet cooperation is often limited by an individual perceiving incompatible personal goal" (Levi 87). Always keep in mind that individual goals are greater than group goals and people may put their goals in front before the group. However, this creates problems within the group and can lead to group problems.

When working in a group you want everyone to cooperate. If all the members have the same motivation this can greatly increase the level of work, honesty and loyalty in the group. All of these factors combined make a team work like cogs in a machine.

By practicing these good skills, workplace competitions can not only be fun, but they can be very productive



Video Explaining Workplace Competition



Explaining The Workplace Competition Video

This video clip delves into the more philosophical understanding of competition in the workplace. The introduction of this video clip demonstrates that competition is commonly seen as one person losing when the other wins. This video clip has questioned whether or not competition should even be encouraged in an environment where there's no preestablished trust. The clip then mentions that rewards need to tap into people's spirits. The main concept of this clip is the ability to tap into social proof. Social Proof is defined in this video as "the tendency for humans in a group, to emulate the behaviors of the groups' more successful members." Winners are encouraged here to share the underlying context of their success, and be praised for their methods in full, not their talents. The participants are noted to compete well when they are in smaller groups and know each other well.

Competition does not always have to be a bad thing. As stated by the Harvard Business Review, "Some research studies suggest such competition can motivate employees, make them put in more effort, and achieve results"(HBR, 2017). In other words, competition tends to bring out the best from employees and this is ever more important in the virtual workplace. After interviewing Gadimi Dorielan in a one-on-one interview about his current position at Accenture, the competition that comes associated with virtual work cannot be understated. Gadimi, being someone who works as a Senior Analyst, expressed to me how when it comes to their virtual openings, the amount of applicants for these positions clearly outweigh those of the positions that require in person work to be done. He stressed to me how it important to truly stand out and how competition in the virtual workplace is more abundant and how competition is actually a good thing as it helps one push hard and bring out the best version of themselves.

From the perspective of an organization, competition that ends up transforming a product in the service industry, such as a custom software solution, **is worth more than their projected profits.** This huge precedent of value that **is set can put a healthy amount of pressure on their employees/team members.** As Business' *6 Things You Should Know About Competition in the Workplace* states, "competition can spur innovation and creativity" in the work place when used correctly.

Sadat interviewed Alison, a now director & account manager at Xybian digital, managing and demoing for new clients all over the globe. When asked about her success, she noted her discovery/implementation of a workflow that is now applied across the board being the turning point. She additionally noted how she started as a Vet-Tech, and worked her way up.



Cons of Competition

Competition is typically associated with negative thoughts when it comes to the workplace. Competition can make a workplace toxic and this can lead to negative consequences. As stated by Applicantonesource.com, "A toxic company/environment works in the opposite way where "they failed", "I win". They, they, they, and I, I, I does nothing productive for a team and only isolates those who may not perform as well"(Schur 2020). To put it differently, an environment gets toxic due to competition and people only start caring about their own individual performance. Team performance is thrown out the window and essentially everyone is left to fend off for themselves. When interviewing Gadimi, he expressed a similar feeling. During his virtual team exercises that are conducted online, Gadimi describes how when presenting to certain groups, the sense of a "team" environment is nonexistent. He expresses how the people he was presenting to were all acting in selfish ways and trying to stand out to capture his attention. There was no sense of team among these group of individuals that work with each other. He says it felt as if competition knocked the team out of each individual and forced it to become a "I" environment.



Cons Cont. : Hyper-Competition

The Fine Line

The Toxicity of a Hyper-Competitive Work Environment revolves around the idea of whether competition can be healthy and when competition becomes toxic. Competition can be healthy such as how it may motivate certain workers who have become complacent and comfortable to work hard once again. However, here exists a fine line between healthy competition and when it

becomes toxic.



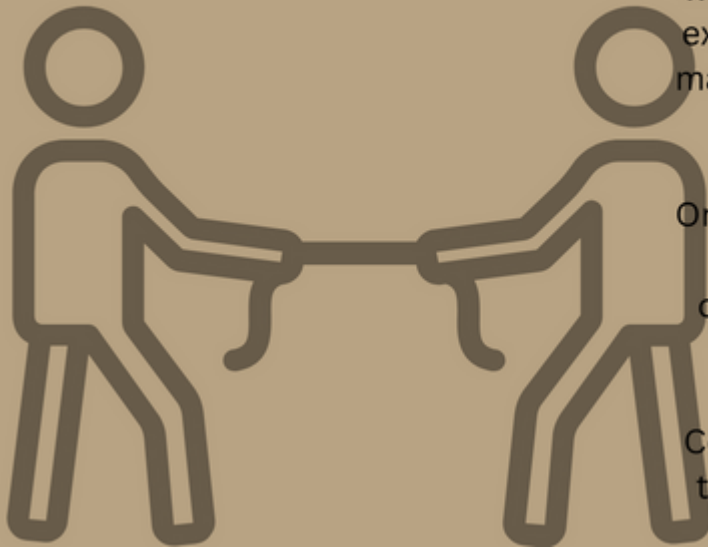
Safeguarding The Workplace

The term “**The Muse**” argues how competition brings unwanted stress and anxiety onto employees which is why it could be toxic.

Another viewpoint by “Chron” presents how there exists a point where competition is good and promotes innovation, but there also exists a point where competition becomes toxic since one's success makes others work look poorly. According to the article, competition truly becomes **toxic when “fun”** is lost within it.

Once it becomes independent and a loss is not viewed as a company loss, but a loss that is solely put on one member, that is when competition becomes toxic. Competition is inevitable and leaders need to make sure competition remains healthy.

Competition is good when **healthy and must be kept healthy** rather than toxic in order to make sure the workplace environment is not harmed. (Schur 1)



Video Explaining How to Deal With Competitive Coworkers



What to take from the video: Hyper Competitive Coworker

This video gives some helpful advice on how to work with a hyper competitive coworker who is either trying to be better than everyone else or make you look bad.

The first piece of advice is keep focus. Prioritize producing high quality work and try to impress your boss, customers, and yourself. Ultimately those are the only people who you need to have look favorably upon you.

It is easy to get sucked into the competition your coworker has set, making both of your lives more difficult than they need to be. The next tip is know when to cut your losses, not everyone will like you and that is ok. Don't waste time trying to win someone over who is actively rooting against you.

The final piece of advice is if you do decide to bring the issue to your boss, have concrete evidence that supports your claims and maintain professionalism. Do not come across as whining or taking things personally. Remember Not all organizations benefit from having a competitive environment and one person can cause a domino effect if not handled properly.

"4 Rules for Healthy Workplace Competition"



“4 Rules for Healthy Workplace Competition” Video explained

The first rule given is “Don’t penalize” This is a great point as when employees are anxious or worried it could heavily affect their work. The second point given is “Don’t compete at the expense of collaboration” This is more towards the more competitive employees so those are the ones who would do anything to win. That is not good and it should not be promoted. In this video, number three is “Turn it into a game” The publisher claims that game elements have been linked to improved motivation. This can include a point system or even a leaderboard. The last point is to avoid unnecessary conflict. That is pretty self-explanatory. Conflict is something that you never want to encounter while on a team because it can lead to less production and fights which isn't good.

Conclusion

Competition can be viewed as just another tool in the toolbox of an organization that, like anything, can be used or misused, for better or for worse. Competition can help bring out the most efficient and productive side of some people making them far better at their job than without it. On the positive side it can push people farther than they were willing to go prior to the extra boost of competition and engage individuals to a higher extent. On the other hand there are people who crumble under competition or worse, cheat and lie to achieve victory. The competition can cause team members to look at each other as enemies rather than friends. As talked about previously, both in the individual and group setting, competition can breed anxious, distrusting, and fearful work environments not conducive to achieving the common goal. Being in competition can also have lasting effects in the form of grudges or distrust amongst team members after the competition is over. Knowing your team members and their personalities is vital when using competition to elicit positive outcomes. In most cases competition will not be as useful or productive in the long run as a collaborative effort from an entire team.



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