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The 7 Different Personalities in the Workplace (And How to Manage Each of Them)

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For as much as we complain about our colleagues, workplaces would be boring—and ineffective—if we all shared the same personalities, motivations, and communication styles.

That said, there's a difference between individual personality types complementing each other and conflicting with one another. In fact, the [Universal Class website](#) cites [research from Gatlin, Wysocki and Kepner](#) suggesting that these differences can lead to challenges in the workplace if they aren't appropriately addressed.

“Problems can occur over the way that people prefer to accomplish tasks or interact with one another. For example, some workers may prefer not socializing or distractions during certain hours and keep their office door shut while others may see this as unfriendly or even rude behavior.”

When do conflicting personalities become a problem that threatens to derail [office productivity](#)? While every situation is different, learning to identify these seven different types will help you develop the [employee management solutions](#) needed to keep your office

working harmoniously.

1. The Solo Artist

You might see the Solo Artist grabbing lunch in the break room, but you rarely see them hanging out by the water cooler, gossiping with other employees. Their work is well-executed; they're simply not the type to engage socially or to volunteer to lead team projects.

Managing the Solo Artist: While assigning the Solo Artist to team projects might be unavoidable, offer them opportunities to meet with you one-on-one or to take on individual work assignments.

Further, don't push the Solo Artist to engage socially; doing so will only frustrate both of you. Instead, show that you recognize their achievements, while giving them plenty of time to process more difficult communications, such as constructive feedback or negative performance reviews.

2. The Master of Illusion

Like a magician, the Master of Illusion has an uncanny ability to disappear whenever they're not needed (and even sometimes when they are). They're always prepared with an excuse for their behavior—they seem to run into an unusual number of traffic jams, minor dental emergencies, and sick pets.

Managing the Master of Illusion: Working with this personality type requires a clear, frank discussion of goals and objectives. Don't be dragged into their excuses; instead, be direct about the problematic behaviors you've observed and the consequences the employee will face if they continue.

Michael Cheary, writing for [Reed.co.uk](https://www.reed.co.uk), offers the following suggestion:

“Remain firm and redirect the lazy employee to appropriate tasks, and make sure you regularly check in on their progress. Once they know their shirking has been spotted, they’re usually much more inclined to pull their weight.”

3. The Upward Manager

The Upward Manager—often called by less appropriate names elsewhere—can be detected by a curious disconnect: Upper management loves them and employees lower on the totem pole hate them.

Managing the Upward Manager: Recognize that, often, [brown-nosing behavior comes from personal insecurity](#). Getting to know the Upward Manager might help, but it’s also important that you not be swayed by their efforts. Listen to the office gossip to find Upward Managers. Then, set the necessary boundaries to redirect their attention-seeking behaviors to actual on-the-job work.

4. Everybody’s Best Friend

Everybody’s Best Friend is a true extrovert. Prone to office gossip, you’ll find this employee hanging out in the break room, stopping by other people’s desks—basically, anywhere that doesn’t involve attending to their own work.

Managing Everybody’s Best Friend: If you can, channel this employee’s naturally engaging tendencies toward getting others involved, whether through [formal employee engagement programs](#) or informal efforts toward building company culture.

Watch out, however, for gossipy behavior that turns toxic. [Suzanne Benoit](#) of Benoit Consulting describes [how this can happen in the workplace](#):

“The Gossiper collects (banks) social information and uses (lends) it to his/her advantage by spreading gossip or repeating rumors. These employees are likely to align with those who have power because they may be less politically savvy in today’s workplace.”

Being attentive to your direct reports and their overall morale can help you pick up on these more subtle schemes and take control before employees begin to feel marginalized or outright attacked.

5. The Ticking Time Bomb

The workplace can be an emotionally charged place, and nowhere is this more true than in offices that boast one or more ticking time bombs. You don’t know when this employee will go off, but you do know that you can expect to see their anger at regular intervals or in response to any perceived slight.

Managing the Ticking Time Bomb: Don’t brush off angry employees, as their strong emotions can color everything from workplace morale to your company’s reputation.

[Jacob Shriar](#) of OfficeVibe [notes](#):

“There is an energy that surrounds angry employees, and they affect everything (and everyone) around them. Now more than ever, with the proliferation of social media and openness on the internet, angry employees can do incredible amounts of damage to your brand.”

Instead, Shriar recommends treating employee rage as a powerful

learning opportunity. Rather than shy away, dig deeper to find out what's at the core of the ticking time bomb's anger—then take whatever steps you can to remedy the situation.

True anger often stems from not being heard. Proper employee management—for workers of all types, angry employees included—involves listening closely in order to find opportunities to make positive changes.

6. Woe Is Me

It seems like everyone is out to get this employee. There's the landlord that's demanding an unreasonable rent increase, a parent or sibling who takes up too much of their time, or maybe a coworker who isn't pulling their weight on a joint project.

One thing's for sure: It isn't the fault of Woe Is Me. It never has been, and it never will be.

Managing Woe Is Me: Office victims vary in terms of the lengths to which they'll go to make themselves seem pitiable. Some resort to victimhood out of a sense of insecurity; others do so maliciously in order to avoid being held accountable for their actions.

As in the case of the master of illusion, properly managing Woe Is Me requires maintaining objectivity in the face of excuses or emotional storytelling. Stick to the facts. If you need to give constructive feedback, do so using defined, documented examples of past behaviors. If discipline seems appropriate in response to a given situation, get the story from all parties involved to ensure details aren't being left out.

7. The Ego Monster

There isn't a project out there that the ego monster won't take credit for. They're the first to claim responsibility for a great idea—and the first to abandon a project if its outcome is uncertain. They're constantly looking out for number one, often to the detriment of their colleagues.

Managing the Ego Monster: The narcissistic behavior demonstrated by the Ego Monster is often rooted, again, in insecurity. Understanding this and changing the resulting behaviors, however, are two separate things entirely.

Ego Monsters of all stripes struggle to see their behavior as inappropriate, making change difficult. Consider carefully whether you're "all-in" on these employees. If you are, you need to work closely with them to make team interactions more successful. If not, it might be better to cut your losses and move on.

Certainly, this isn't a comprehensive list. Employees might share characteristics of several archetypes, or they might not embody any of these.

[Managing your team](#) effectively, therefore, requires close monitoring and understanding of the different personality variables at play. Watch for signals—verbal or nonverbal—that your employees are unhappy with their coworkers. The faster you can identify the problem and deploy a potential solution, the less personality types like these threaten to create a negative atmosphere in your workplace.

*What other personality types have you seen in the workplace?
Leave us a note below sharing your observations.*

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