

5 Ways to Avoid Career Suicide

by Dawn Rasmussen | November 10, 2011

THERE ARE THOUSANDS OF BOOKS AND BLOGS TELLING YOU HOW TO GET HIRED. But no one tells you what *not* to do once you are. There are plenty of stupid things people do on the job to kill their careers. Your human resource manager undoubtedly has some interesting stories (and truth is always stranger than fiction). Here are five ways to avoid committing career suicide.

1. Don't prepare. *Always* be prepared...before meetings, during meetings, after meetings, while working on a project—even in your career documents. Preparation structures your work and provides the professional polish to your profile. Who are the most effective people? The ones who are most prepared. Identify someone within your company who embodies this, and pay attention. If you aren't prepared, you're a viable target for layoffs or termination; employers want efficiency and don't have room for compassion or patience for people who aren't.

2. Lie on career documents. Nothing will put you as sideways with HR as lying—or exaggerating—on your résumé or application. Lies are character assassination, and the implications of lying in this arena are far-reaching. People talk...and spread your bad reputation.

3. Gossip and start rumors. You spend eight+ hours with your coworkers every day, so it's natural that you know each other's business. But you absolutely must keep your own counsel. Passing along things shared in confidence or starting untrue rumors makes you look pretty petty and can backfire. Keep your mouth shut and your eyes open, and don't give in the urge to discuss things that don't concern you.

4. Cover up mistakes. You can and do make mistakes. But the *worst* thing you can do is try to cover it up, because your coworkers will find out. When you try to hide your tracks, it speaks to the illicit lengths you will go to deceive others. Own up to your mistakes. It may be uncomfortable and have repercussions, but it's better than a lifetime paying for the dumb decision to hide it.

5. Blame someone else/take credit that isn't yours. You know these people...they walk among us: the person who “never” makes mistakes and the person who always finds someone else to blame. Sowing misgivings and mistrust will never get you ahead.

Don't make these bad decisions. They're tantamount to career suicide and could negatively impact your employment prospects for the rest of your life. **One+**