

Finding ways to thwart the jerk at work

By Phyllis Korkki, New York Times

Most of us have days at work when we walk around with a spring in our step and perform our tasks with gusto – and other days when our feet drag and we just can't seem to get motivated. A new study encourages employees to look more closely at the people around them as one reason for that disparity.

A team of researchers that included Gretchen Spreitzer, a management professor at the University of Michigan Ross School of Business, found that some employees are “de-energizers” who spread their dispiriting attitude to others. In nonacademic parlance, these people are known as jerks. Professor Spreitzer wrote the study with Alexandra Gerbasi and Andrew Parker of Grenoble École de Management, Christine L. Porath of Georgetown University, and Rob Cross of the University of Virginia.

Almost everyone knows of prima donnas who get away with bad behavior because they are so good at their jobs. What managers may not realize is that this type of behavior spreads a dark cloud over everyone else, and the whole organization suffers, Professor Spreitzer said.

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