

A White Paper by Inspiring Minds Consulting, Ltd.



CYBERBULLYING

TIPS AND TECHNIQUES

FOR

DEALING WITH

CYBERBULLYING AT WORK

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Situation: cyberbullying and bullying in the workplace.

Today's uncertain employment climate fosters dysfunctional workplaces and personal situations that were virtually unheard of not so many years ago. The economy, our work lives and our personal lives now meld together, and our ability to handle volatile situations is decreasing due to the escalation of unacceptable behavior of friends, colleagues and, perhaps, family. Technology such as Facebook, MySpace, and Twitter are major players in the social media game, and each offers it's own special blank canvas for cyberbullies of all ages.

anger:

An emotional state that varies from mild to intense frustration, pain, irritation, fury, or rage at a person, event or thought.

Problem: The failure of companies to provide a safe, bully free working environment.

The myopic perspective held by the powers that be at many companies and corporations is that bullying isn't a problem within the workplace—their workplace. When a bullying complaint surfaces, the typical response is to sweep it under the rug, or simply dismiss it as a 'communication problem.'

Unfortunately, the communication problems are sweeping through the workplace at an alarming rate, but for some inexplicable reason, we don't give it the same credence we lend to schoolyard bullying. Why? Do we feel that once we reach adulthood, the threat of bullying should be left at the office door? Maybe. But it goes deeper than that—and, it's important that you, your company executives and administrators realize and understand the severe consequences of anger, bullying, cyberbullying and PTSD that takes place under the guise of something else.

One important aspect of dealing with the pervasive bullying problem in our corporations and businesses is to openly discuss bullying, its triggers, potential canvases for bullying, its consequences, and viable solutions for preventing and rectifying the problem. And, it is a problem.

So, I'll take it from the beginning. Of course, there are myriad reasons for cyberbullying, but I believe there is a common denominator—anger. When you deal with anger in a positive way, it serves a more positive purpose. Yes, you may still be angry, but your actions to diffuse a potential volatile situation fueled by anger will serve to increase your ability to handle emotional situations. You are in control—not the person, situation or thing that triggered your emotional response.

It boils down to education. If you're the victim of, or you know about a workplace bullying or cyberbullying situation, do you have the correct tools in your coping toolbox to face bullies and render them psychologically helpless when they attempt to use their tactics? If not, it's imperative that you learn about anger, its affect on you and other people, how it's implemented by the workforce bully and, perhaps most important, what you can do to diffuse and prevent it.

CYBERBULLIES AT WORK

Are Customers Always Right When They Try To Bully An Employee?

Search the phrase 'cyberbullying' on Google, and you'll get 28,700,000 results. Check out a few pages, and you'll find most of the information focuses on schoolyard bullying. From media coverage to the statistics, cyberbullying takes the lead. It doesn't just happen to kids, however—it happens to adults, too. And, strange as it may seem, we still have trouble understanding and dealing with being the victim of bullying. After all, we grew up and left all that stuff behind on the playground—didn't we? The sad fact is that if you are connected to the world via cell phone, email or computer, you are a target for cyberbullying. And, I didn't even mention Facebook, MySpace and Twitter.

If you work for an organization that publically provides your name, your telephone number, or your email address, then you're already set up to be the perfect target! So, that brings us to the million-dollar question—how does your company work with you to meet your goals when customer service is a key function of your job?

It's important that you understand the magnitude, effects and ferocity of cyberbullying. Chances are you need some help recognizing cyberbullying behavior when it happens to you, or to a co-worker. And, learning to identify and implement viable solutions for dealing with cyberbullying will be quite a boost in self-confidence and self-esteem!

What you need to know ...

- why bullying happens
- what a cyberbully wants, and how to respond professionally and ethically
- ways to deal with the personal stress of being a cyber target, and/or supporting fellow employees who are under attack
- how to protect your private life from your public life

WHY CYBERBULLYING HAPPENS

Definition: cyberbullying (v.)

Cyberbullying involves the use of information and communication technologies such as:

- e-mail
- cell phone
- pager text messages
- instant messaging (IM)
- defamatory personal websites
- defamatory online personal polling websites

in an effort to support deliberate, repeated, and hostile behavior, by an individual or group, that is intended to harm others.

Cyberbullying—it's not just for kids, anymore! In case you're too young to remember, there was a slogan for a cereal that said, "Kix! It's not just for kids!" and the entire marketing campaign was geared toward enticing adults to munch on their cereal. Well, the same campaign exists today, except that it's in the cyber world, and the product is cyberbullying.

With the advent of Facebook, MySpace and Twitter, cyberbullying tactics are escalating at an alarming rate, and parents must be vigilant to protect their children, and YOU must be vigilant in order to protect yourself.

Unbelievably, there are groups of adults who dedicate their time to defamation, harrassment and demeaning other individuals. They're found in communities that link to blogs and chatrooms, and once you're in their clutches, watch out! They operate under the guise of anonymity, and they're cowards in their own right.

There are two fundamental types of cyberbullying:

- direct attack, and
- cyberbullying by proxy.

A direct attack is one that is sent directly to a child or an adult via:

- Instant messaging or text messaging
- Blogs (Myspace, Facebook ... etc.)
- Stolen passwords for email, instant messaging, and other online accounts
- Websites (websites that are created to tease or hurt another person)
- Pictures sent through email and cell phones
- Internet polling ("Who's hot, Who's not")
- Sending malicious code (viruses, spy ware and hacking programs)
- Sending porn and other junk emails or IMs
- Impersonation (posing as the victim and harming other people)
- Interactive gaming (adults play, too!)

WHAT DOES A CYBERBULLY WANT?

Cyberbullying by proxy is when bullies get someone else to do the bullying for them. In many cases, the individual who is being ‘used’ by the bully has no idea that they are simply a means to an end. Cyberbullying is considered by some to be the most dangerous type of bullying, because it often involves adults in the attacks. And, sometimes, an adult has no idea that they’re bullying a child. However, the simple act of bullying itself should give a clueless adult the idea that they’re involved in something nefarious.

When it comes to the reasons people cyberbully, they’re varied:

- frustration or anger,
- revenge,
- bolstering ego,
- laughs or entertainment, or
- they’re bored, or they have too much time on their hands.

One common reason adult cyberbullies engage in this aberrant behavior is the need to flex their ego-hungry muscles, and to torment those whom they perceive as unworthy of their attention. In the work environment, it translates into supervisor or managerial verbal abuse, passing over an employee for a well-deserved promotion, or bad-mouthing a co-worker which is fueled by jealousy.

When considering the various types of bullies, it’s important to differentiate bullies from cyberbullies. The motives of cyberbullies are different than the offline bullies (such as schoolyard bullies), because their canvas for bullying is much more anonymous, and the social media forums offer a blank canvas for anyone who has such bullying tendencies.



An excerpt from Faith Wood’s *The Graduating Bully*:

Sarah’s dream of joining the best accounting firm in Miami finally came true three months ago. After a whirlwind move, she settled into a small two-bedroom condo only minutes from the beach — she thought she’d ‘died and gone to heaven’! That’s what her Mama always used to say

...

She loved waking up to an ocean breeze, and as she dressed for her first day at work, she felt a sense of freedom. Finally, after all of her hard work, it paid off. This was her dream. Sarah snagged a plum job at an accounting firm in the south — its reputation touched the northern tip of South Carolina and it seemed as if everyone knew the name of Hollis & Drake, Accounting Consultants. As much as she hated to admit it, her dad probably played a part in her getting this job — his golf partner was the Sr. VP of Operations at H & D. But, it didn’t make any difference — she was where she knew she needed — and wanted — to be.

SARAH'S STORY ...

The first weeks flew by and by the time she started the second month, Sarah felt as if she were starting to fit in. It took awhile, but she was finally included in the 'let's go grab a beer after work' group, and for the first time in a very long time, she felt solid and included.

But, alas — it wasn't meant to last long. Within the first couple of months, Sarah began to feel pangs of self-doubt, stress and mild depression. She didn't think too much about it, because she thought she was just missing her family and friends from back home. When the feelings started to intensify, however, she began to take a closer look at the things in her life that may be causing such a strong sense of frustration. When she began to piece the puzzle together, a pattern of abuse and ridicule began to emerge.


When Sarah first began her position at Hollis and Drake, she thought her direct supervisor was cold and unwelcoming. Her supervisor made no attempt to make Sarah feel at home and, as the months crawled by, it was clear her supervisor had no interest in helping Sarah become successful at H&D. Whenever Sarah would complete a project, there were never words of praise, props or kudos for a job well done. In fact, it was just the opposite — her boss would pick apart her work and find every minute detail that may not be quite right. In the weekly team meetings, Sarah found herself as the target for her supervisor's barbs, and she could feel herself spiraling downward into a deeper depression.

It wasn't long before Sarah's friends and family began to wonder what was wrong, but when they asked her about it, she adroitly dodged their questions and changed the subject. She didn't want anybody to know she was the victim of a bully.

Then the unthinkable happened. On a particularly humid morning in June, Sarah was found in her bathtub, warm water barely trickling from the faucet, her wrists nearly slashed to the bone.

Colleagues from work attended the memorial service, including her boss, and a few of Sarah's closest friends murmured words of sorrow, as the perpetrator of Sarah's abuse stood by, her lips clenched tightly.

She never said a word.



What this excerpt doesn't tell you is that Sarah's supervisor sabotaged her via social media on a daily basis, and Sarah had no idea as to the extent of the slandering. She wasn't into Facebook, so all of the negative comments that were swirling around her weren't falling on deaf ears -- or, Sarah's ears. Sarah was a victim of 'bullycide'—and, that says it all.

HOW TO PROTECT YOUR PRIVATE LIFE

So, how do you go about protecting yourself, your family and, perhaps, even your friends from the clutches of an adult cyberbully? Unfortunately, adult cyberbullies are a little more savvy than their schoolyard counterparts—they know what subliminal buttons to push, and they are sneaky in their torment. But, a little common sense goes a long, long way ...

Before you sign up for Facebook, Twitter, MySpace, LinkedIn or any other social networking site, make certain that you don't provide any personal information. A quick search of Facebook reveals that teens are becoming smarter about not making their town, phone or cell number public information, and it shouldn't be any different for an adult.

Dealing with a cyberbully is virtually the same for adults as it is for kids—nip it in the bud!

- Do be very clear about the sites you visit—do some research if you haven't visited the site before.
- Don't provide personal pictures to the entire world! If you post pictures, make certain that you know who will be viewing them.
- Don't post your town, city, address, phone number, cell number, or any personal information anywhere on your social networking site.
- Never share your password, and change it regularly.

RemoveItNow.com is a site for parents that notifies them when their child's name surfaces anywhere on the Internet, especially chat rooms, social media, etc. You may want to research organizations that offers similar services for adult victims of bullying.

How to Deal with a Cyberbully

Dealing with an adult cyberbully is much the same as it is for schoolyard bullies:

- **Don't respond to the cyberbullies' threats.**

Remember—cyberbullies want to see and hear your response. They live for it, and you can diffuse the threats by not responding to emails, text or IM messages. Cyber bullies want to engage you, and they want to manipulate you into responding. Don't give them what they want!

HOW TO DEAL WITH A CYBERBULLY

- **Don't delete information that relates to cyberbullying.**

Anonymity is the name of the game for cyberbullies, and they hide behind their words, emails, texts and social media postings. Fortunately, one thing the cyberbully often forgets is that any message is traceable. If you ever need to involve the police in your efforts to combat cyberbullying, make certain you save each message, because the police will be able to trace it. Bullies have IP addresses just like everyone else, and they aren't as anonymous as they think.

- **Report the cyberbully to ISPs, police and schools (if age appropriate).**

If you don't report the bullying, how are the police going to deal with it? The answer is simple—they're not. The reasons for reporting cyberbullying are two-fold: first, it will help you in your situation if you are the victim of a bully. Second, it will help others from a cyberbully's attacks, as well. It's funny how involving the authorities can stop a bully dead in his or her tracks, isn't it?

- **Pay close attention to your 'spidey sense'.**

Your intuitive senses are your best friend—they alert you when something isn't right, and they put you on notice that you need to pay attention. If you suspect you are the victim of a cyberbully, make an attempt to ferret out the source of your suspicions. Cyberbullying is as dangerous as other forms of bullying, if not more so. Be aware of what's going on around you—if there's a change in how your co-workers are treating you, and if your supervisor treats you differently than your colleagues. Once you are aware, you are able to deal with the cyberbully.

- **Don't forward hateful emails or messages to your friends.**

When you make the decision to forward a cyberbully attack to your friends or family, you are playing right into the bully's hands. And, by doing so, you may be implicated as a bully, as well.

- **Don't be a part of a cyberbully attack on another individual.**

Sometimes, you are the unwitting recipient of a cyberbully attack simply by opening your email. If you receive such trash from a cyberbully about someone else, simply respond to the person who sent it to you, and inform them that you don't want to receive such correspondence. Also inform them how harmful his or her words are to everyone. But—only respond once. It may do some good, and it may not.

Whether bullies are from the schoolyard, in your office, or in cyberspace, remember:


bullies are cowards!

Similar to traditional workplace bullying, cyberbullying is about power and control in workplace relationships. It's often motivated by insecurity, jealousy or fear. The intention of the perpetrator is the same, and that is to undermine, discredit, embarrass and/or harm the target through: sabotage, insults, undermining work performance, public humiliation, and sarcasm. The main difference is the use of technology to accomplish this goal.

Cyberbullies block their numbers, use an alias, or access someone else's email address so that a target may have no idea from where the message is originating. A disgruntled employee can now choose to target his/her employer by anonymously posting damaging or even privileged information about the company to social media sites, blogs or chatrooms, rival companies, or to traditional media.

For millions of people worldwide, social media has become immersive entertainment. We share everything from personal updates and opinions to photos and videos. We see dirty laundry, relationship betrayals, cyberbullying, and new ideas. Some of us measure our self-worth against the number of 'likes' we generate in response to a posting. We log on at work, home, on our phones and pads, twenty-four hours a day.

We are consumed with being consumed.



Cyberbullying is more than just name calling on Facebook—it includes embarrassing photos that are taken without one's permission, contacting an individual on his or her cell phone, and threats that are made online. It's a particularly insidious and cowardly form of bullying that's rampant in our society due to the advances in technology, as well as our social inertia towards 'difficult problems'.

For every person in this society who is suffering physical abuse, there are hundreds suffering from the effects of verbal violence. For every person who just got a fist in the face, there are hundreds who just took a verbal blow to the gut. And, there are major differences between these two kinds of injuries. The physical attack is obvious and unmistakable—when someone physically slugs you, you can call the police. The physical attack hurts horribly and leaves a mark, but it's usually over fast, and the mark is evidence in your favor and against your attacker.

Verbal violence is a very different matter. Except in rare cases—for example, when someone lies about you publicly before witnesses, and can be charged with slander—there isn't an agency that you can call for help. The pain of verbal abuse penetrates deep into the self and festers—but, because nothing shows on the surface, you will not win sympathy, much less actual assistance.

Cyberbullies are secretive, conniving, manipulative, and dangerous.

Worst of all, verbal violence goes unrecognized too often, except at a level that you can't understand yourself. You know you are suffering, and you vaguely know where the pain is coming from; but because the aggression is so well hidden, you are likely to blame yourself instead of the aggressor ... "there must be something the matter with me."

There probably is something the matter with you—your problem is that you are the victim of verbal violence, and you don't have any idea about how to defend yourself against it.

What are the biggest challenges when it comes to cyberbullying? Well, there are several:

- Many people can view or take part in cyberbullying
- Cyberbullying is often conducted in secret, and the cyberbullies hide their identities by creating false profiles or names, or sending anonymous messages.
- Cyberbully postings are difficult to remove because they're shared online, so they can be recorded and saved in different places.
- If the victim of the cyberbully uses technology, it's difficult to escape the cyberbully.
- The content (photos, texts, videos) can be shared with many people.
- The content may be easy to find by searching the web.

Let's look at social media ...

Today's social media is a way of thinking. It's not about sales, or ads, or click-through rates. It's about pursuing relationships and fostering communities of consumers. Social media is the vehicle by which men and women have finally decided it's cool (and, valuable) to open up, share, make friends and have conversations. For many in your community, social media is the crack cocaine of the Internet—we want it, we need it, and we go into withdrawal when we don't get enough of it.

Social media changes the way we win elections, build community involvement and, activate or mobilize government.

It is ... an all-seeing eye.

Cyberbullies lurk in the shadows of the internet—just waiting.

If you want to truly understand social media, pay attention to what the kids are doing with it. They are leading the world's transition into digital media—it's an incredible phenomenon to witness!

Media is the connective tissue of society. Media is how you know the location and time of your friend's birthday party. Media is how you know what's happening in Tehran, who's in charge in Tegucigalpa, or the price of tea in China. Media is how you know why Kierkegaard disagreed with Hegel. Media is how you know about anything more than ten yards away. All of these used to be separated into public media (such as visual or print communications made by a small group of professionals), and personal media (such as letters and phone calls made by ordinary citizens).

Now, they're fused.



However, despite its shortcomings, there are many benefits of social media in business. The on-going conversation is whether or not you care to be involved. If you choose not to be involved, you lose control of the conversation about your product—your business. You become irrelevant! Trust can take years to build, but it can be eroded in just a few days.

To avoid disaster, you have to keep one finger on the pulse of the social web. You can also take advantage of your loyal customer base if you foster online community conversations, and these positive comments can help make the unfounded negative comments less socially accepted. Plus, developing a loyal following can help mitigate all kinds of future problems, but you have to be smart about it. Communication is key! Always engage!

Remember, people need a reason to show up in your chatrooms. What are the conversations you want them to have? Use the social sites as a great way to foster involvement and engagement. Encourage all your customers to “Like” or “follow” you and post kudos, and make the social site the hub of great engagement to ensure that cyberbullies are dealt with if their complaints are unfounded.

Cyberbullies are weak.

Margaret Kemeny, a researcher from the University of California in Los Angeles, discovered that *negative evaluation, especially by someone you respect or is important to you, elevates cortisol in our blood—and, that causes us to experience stress!*

When we feel that our identity or sense of self is at stake, a chemical cascade takes place in our brains which leads to the release of cortisol into the bloodstream. This is what makes social cyberbullying so pervasive—it's like getting one bad comment and 12 accolades ...

Which one gets your attention?



Cyberbullies love stress—not theirs. Yours. So, how will they know that their tactics are working? Simple—if anyone else notices the following symptoms, so does the cyberbully:

- Increased irritability, annoyance and/or anger
- Withdrawal from friends, colleagues and social activities
- Decreased sense of happiness, enthusiasm and energy
- A lack of concentration
- Increased restlessness and indecision
- Dependence on drugs/alcohol
- Insomnia

In an online world, there are two distinct types of cyberbullies, and they are different than a typical cyberbully. Anyone who belittles, attacks, humiliates or otherwise harasses someone online is considered a cyberbully.

Meet 'Flamers' and 'Trolls'.

Flamers and Trolls

‘Flamers’ and ‘trolls’ are Internet slang words for those unsavory people who often post debatable, emotional, or simply off-topic messages in the ‘comments’ section of blogs, message boards, Internet Relay Chat (IRC), and even in email mailing lists. Their main objective is to bait a person, or groups of people, to respond violently by posting provocative or controversial messages. Flamers and trolls post hostile, insulting, or derogatory messages that, in the end, do not attempt to further explain, convince, or at least clarify the point or topic. Basically, flamers and trolls do not respect other people’s opinions and they believe that they are superior, or hold authority over other people in a certain medium or Internet community.

Flaming is the hostile and insulting interaction between Internet users and, occasionally, flamers wish to upset and offend other members of the forum, in which case they can be called ‘trolls’. Most often, however, ‘flames’ are angry or insulting messages over the Internet which are transmitted by people who have strong feelings about a subject. (source: Wikipedia)

FPD, the Flamer Personality Disorder?

FPD Symptoms:

- Name caller: “Flamer” means “name caller”...
- Competitive/argumentative: flamers are fighters and verbal brawlers. They greatly enjoy arguments for their own sake, and will start flame wars intentionally ...
- Amoral: thinking that insults, verbal abuse, character attacks, and even death threats are perfectly acceptable behavior, once “justified”...
- Vengeful: flamers believe that once an insult has been received, it becomes perfectly acceptable to return the insult, or even to embark on a long running insult stream ...
- Deceitful: flamers see nothing wrong with deception and distortion as long as they’re not caught ...
- Narcissitic: flamers have extreme vanity, taking the form of an exquisite sensitivity to anything which even SLIGHTLY resembles an insult ...
- Paranoid: flamers constantly display secretive behavior, being careful to never freely discuss personal info about their schooling, experience, everyday lives ...
- No self-doubt: perfect people never monitor themselves to avoid mistakes ...

Flamers and Trolls

- Self-blind: no insight into their own flaws and foibles ...
- Hypocritical: totally enmeshed in a self-serving bias. When a flamer does some thing, it's a pure and justified deed, but when *you* do exactly the same thing, it's a shameful and disgusting PLOY."
- Self-important: they have a very low opinion of others, and an exalted (if dishonest) opinion of themselves ...
- Denying/projecting: they can't see reality honestly, but must constantly manipulate it by erasing some parts and distorting others.
- Pervasive, long-standing, intense symptoms.

Let's look at trolls—according to Wikipedia, an Internet troll, or simply 'troll' in Internet slang, is someone who posts controversial, inflammatory, irrelevant or off-topic messages in an online community, such as an online discussion forum or chat room, with the intention of provoking other users into an emotional response or to generally disrupt normal on-topic discussion.

The moniker "troll" can mean a number of different things, but, for the most part, a troll is a person who aims to have 'pleasure' at your expense. They are unprincipled people who have the psychological need to feel good by making others feel bad.

Examples:

- One-shot trolls: one-shot troll messages are intended to be disruptive, and tend to be very obvious to ensure that they will receive annoyed replies.
- Disruptive trolls: off topic messages: Those that are irrelevant to the focus of the forum.
- Page widening: filling up fields with large pictures or characters to make previous posts unreadable.
- Offensive media: annoying sound files or disturbing pictures in a message, or linking to shock sites that contain such media. Often these links are disguised as legitimate links. Inflammatory messages, including racist, sexist, classist or other wise needlessly hateful comments.
- Opinionated statements: posting messages expressing their own opinions as generally accepted facts without offering any proof or analysis.

Flamers and Trolls

- Spoiling: deliberately revealing the ending or an important part of movie, book, game, etc. Bumping an old discussion, or rehashing a highly controversial past topic, particularly in smaller online communities.
- Deliberate and repeated misspelling of other people's names in order to disturb or irritate them in a conversation.

Invariably, a FPD flamer will start a flame war. First, the flamer attacks another subscriber unexpectedly. It happens because the flamer felt insulted (exquisite sensitivity to insults), but usually this insult was entirely in his/her own mind. But, the flamer never considers that perhaps he or she made a mistake while interpreting the insult (no self-doubt), and he or she also sees a NEED to answer every insult with insults (vengeful, as well as narcissistic.)

Having created a fight while blaming others for starting it, flamers then lay into their victims, (amoral, combative), while seeing their own actions as a righteous battle against an evil enemy (projection.) If the victim seems hurt, flamers will be disgusted by such weakness (amoral.) But if the victim responds in kind, flamers will immediately complain bitterly about this, while steadfastly denying that the type of attacks they so hate are identical to the ones they're using themselves (hypocrisy, self-serving bias.) If other subscribers object, flamers ignore them as beneath contempt (egotistical), or because they KNOW they must be wrong without even listening to their reasoning (no self-doubt.) Or, perhaps, he ignores them because he is certain that they have hidden agendas, and their complaints could only be false constructs meant to mislead (denial/projection).

Identifying the goals of Internet trolls is most often speculative. Still, several basic goals have been attributed to Internet trolls, according to the type of provoking. Further complicating the issue, many accusatory labelers fail to first question whether the alleged troll material actually is disruptive (a requisite component of trolling behavior) before being declared as such. Thus, many trolls are born of a second party's too-quick own inference of intent, accurate or not.

Whether intentional or not, flamers and trolls bait other people to respond with their emotions, so that they can gain the upper hand in the so-called "discussion". The best way to deal with such people is to take control of your emotions. Emotions can cloud judgment and reasoning, fanning the flames of an Internet flamer, and making the issue bigger.

Flaming or trolling is just like getting into a discussion or fight with a friend or spouse where the person with the cooler head wins, or at least solves the problem. With an online counterpart, you want to pour water, not gasoline, on the flame. If you encounter such offensive statements on your blog, favorite message board, or over a chatting service, here are some things you can do to get rid of them:

Flamers and Trolls

- Instead of wasting so much energy fighting, you can use an open dialog, find some common ground, and begin a process of collaboration: Nestle knows food production. Greenpeace knows environmentally sound practices. Doesn't it make sense that they could both learn a lot from each other?
- Don't just reply from behind a faceless corporate identity and avatar. Be a human being. Talk like a human being. Feel like a human being. Engage on a personal level with commenters.
- Be cordial, be kind, be professional, and assume your role as the custodian of facts. Not propaganda—facts. If someone claims something about your company or services that are inaccurate, politely respond to their comment with a link to factual information that will help them reconsider their position.

So. There you have it. If you're the victim of a cyberbully, or you know someone who is, it's a good idea to know what you're dealing with before you decide to take action. Learn as much as you can about who lurks in the corners of cyberspace, just waiting to pounce. Are they flamers? Or, are they trolls? Can you trust the person you're speaking to in a chatroom?

When you're involved in the business world, you're going to be involved with cyberspace, whether it's via email, texting, or social media. If you take the time to learn how it use cyberspace wisely, it can be a fantastic conduit to success. Learn how to manage your sites, social media, and yourself. Know what to do if a flamer or troll pops up and tries to sabotage your hard work and efforts.

And, above all, don't relax your knowledge base about cyberspace. It's important to keep learning. Technology changes on a daily basis, and if you don't learn to change with it, you can find yourself mired in the mess created by a cyberbully, flamer or troll.

If you wish to learn more about flamers and trolls, please visit:
<http://amasci.com/weird/flamer.html>

SUMMING UP

As much as I hate to say it, if you're involved with the Internet in any way, you'll probably come up against a cyberbully. They really are everywhere, and they can strike when you least expect it. They're filled with anger, and they probably haven't taken any steps to rein in that anger, or make any effort to learn how to manage it.

In order for you to navigate our technological world, it's a good idea to learn how to cope with anger (your anger, as well as anger in others), tips and techniques for dealing with anger, as well as how to recognize anger that's associated with cyberbullying. In other words, learn as much as you can!

When you take the time and make the effort to learn about what's happening in your world—business and personal—you have a much greater chance for success. And, success is a personal thing. It's whatever you deem it to be. So, don't let anyone or anything stand in your way of achieving your dreams.

Learn how to use anger to your benefit by knowing the triggers for cyberbullies. Learn and practice the tips and techniques for dealing with cyberbullies—remember, the operative word is 'practice'.

Above all, plan ahead. Plan what you will do if you encounter a bully at the office, in your personal life, or in cyberspace. Plan your responses to the bully's insidious and pernicious attacks.

In other words, plan for your success!

One more thing—don't think for a second that you have to go it alone. If you, or your company needs coaching or training, contact Faith at www.imind.ca, or you can also send her an email at faith@imind.ca.

The important thing is to seek help if you need it—it will be a great step toward dealing with your situation.

Definition: success (n.)

1. the favourable outcome of something attempted
2. the attainment of wealth, fame, etc.
3. an action, performance, etc., that is characterized by success
4. a person or thing that is successful