

What is Workplace Restoration?



An unhealthy workplace culture often develops following or during a significant negative event (such as COVID-19), or because of a series of unaddressed issues. Workplace Restoration (WR) is a process that focuses on workplace wellness and rebuilds a psychologically healthy and safe workplace culture. It is a process of renewing and restoring stressed, unhealthy and/or unsafe work environments by involving everyone in data gathering, meaning making, and problem solving. Typically, a WR process is undertaken by a trained WR facilitator.

The following guide lists the principles and process used by a WR facilitator and makes suggestions for how you can prepare for and ensure a successful restoration process in your organization.

The following questions point to observable behaviors that indicate your workplace could use some restoration. The more questions you answer yes to, the more you should prioritize a restoration process.

1. Are you and/or your staff experiencing an unusual amount of stress?
2. Are you and/or your staff experiencing miscommunication and/or unresolved issues?
3. Have there been incidents in which people felt hurt, misunderstood and/or let down?
4. Has there been unproductive conflict?
5. Have there been losses of people or projects?
6. Have work processes changed?
7. Is there a lot of silence during your meetings?
8. Is the quality of the work showing steady decline?
9. Have there been interactions that have led to a loss of trust in each other?
10. Are people taking an unusual amount of sick time?

11. Has morale declined significantly?
12. Are people reluctant to bring up important issues?
13. As leader, are you unclear about what your staff are thinking or feeling?
14. Are people unclear about their roles?
15. Are you (or do you notice others) avoiding certain topics or people?
16. Has there been an increase in grievances or formal complaints?
17. Have there been concerns regarding bullying/harassment?
18. Has productivity decreased?
19. Has your team lost focus on the overall role or purpose of the team?
20. Is there an unusual amount of negativity not balanced with optimism?

Principles:



Meaningful Involvement and Ownership – Everyone, regardless of position, is included and invited to participate in the process. Solutions can come from anyone and ownership must come from everyone.

Implication: When a workplace is unhealthy, it's common and normal for everyone to feel that it is the "other's" fault. In effective WR processes, everyone acknowledges the role they play in both the functioning and non-functioning aspects of the workplace.



Omni-partiality – A WR process is not an impartial process, but rather a process that is on everyone's side and, where required, addresses power imbalances in the workplace.

Implication: Everyone must be willing to continually step into the position of the "other." Leaders need to be very conscious of their power and take steps to ensure that they are continually creating a safe place for their staff to offer their honest perspectives.



Confidentiality – WR facilitators do not share details of their conversations with anyone. They provide summarized themes for the workplace to discuss. They also introduce confidentiality into every meeting so that workplace participants feel more comfortable to discuss important issues.

Implication: Everyone must also agree to confidentiality which means that they do not engage in gossip or speculation about others.



Engagement – WR facilitators, working with the organizational sponsor, invite everyone to engage in the process. It's ideal if everyone engages, however, if some people do not want to engage, they are not forced. At its heart WR is about moving a system forward and not everyone needs to be a part of that.

Implication: Invitation, not requirement, is key. If some folks do not want to participate, that is ok. It is expected, however, that they will follow whatever does emerge out of the process.



Communication – WR facilitators provide frequent, transparent and direct communication about the process throughout the process. They share the same details with everyone.

Implication: Everyone is encouraged to ask questions of the WR facilitator throughout the process.



Safety and Trust – WR facilitators create a safe space to ensure that trust is built through the process. The above principles are key in creating safety for everyone.

Implication: Everyone is encouraged to be open to rebuilding trust.

The Process:

1 Organizing – This phase involves identifying participants to be included in the process, the clarification of principles guiding the process, administrative support and timelines.

Implication: The organization must commit to resources and time.

2 Assessment – This phase involves gathering perspectives on the impact of the event on workplace participants, the factors that may have contributed to it, the overall health and functioning of the workplace and recommendations for initiatives that could help restore the workplace. Typically, this is done through confidential one on one interviews.

Implication: This phase is often like letting the steam out of a pressure cooker. For some it's a welcome release and for others it can still feel very pressured. It's vitally important, therefore, that everyone has access to supportive resources like an Employee Assistance Program.

3 Reporting/Recommendations – The WR facilitator themes the data from the interviews, prepares a report and provides recommendations for initiatives based on the data gathered. The facilitator then meets with the workplace, presents the report, and helps the workplace decide on their next steps/initiatives.

Implication: While everyone will receive the same report, the order in which the report is debriefed with the workplace depends upon levels of trust and support needed by those involved. The WR facilitator structures these meetings so that safety is created, and trust and positive forward momentum are built.

4 Initiatives – This phase is unique to each workplace but often includes developing new guidelines for the work, restructuring of regular meetings, the development of communication and/or conflict protocols, the development of regular social activities and check-ins, coaching and support, or the development of culture goals.

Implication: It's imperative that leaders commit to and support whatever solutions emerge out of the report and debriefing sessions. Staff must take responsibility for their part in the solutions.

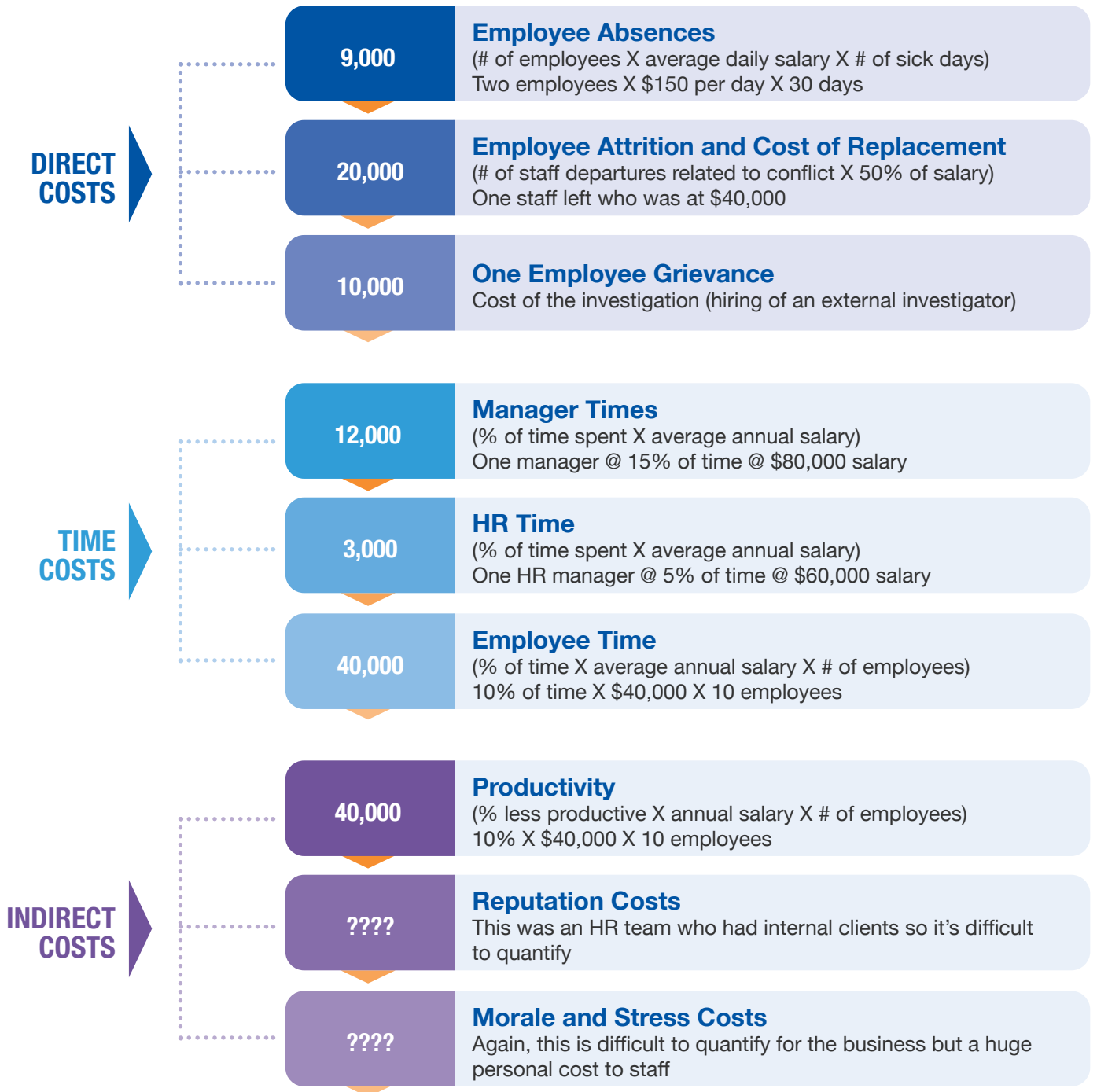
5 Follow-through – In this phase, the WR facilitator would schedule regular check-ins on progress and assist the workplace in adjusting initiatives as necessary for a period of 6-12 months.

Implication: Leaders must hold regular meetings and check-ins with the workplace. This is probably the most important phase ... often good momentum on initiatives can be lost because of lack of follow-through.

We just got results from our engagement survey and 85% of staff were feeling empowered, so I think that says a lot for your process. I've appreciated your straight up, no-BS approach to looking at difficult situations. *(A past client)*

The Cost of Unresolved Issues and Conflict

(Estimated costs from a past client of 10 staff and one manager over one year)



TOTAL ESTIMATED COSTS = \$134,000 per year + ??? hard to quantify costs

About Tammy Dewar

Workplace Restoration Facilitator

Tammy Dewar is a passionate facilitator and coach who integrates theory and practice into meaningful, engaging and transformational learning experiences. She holds a PhD in adult learning from the University of Calgary, is a Professional Certified Coach through the International Coach Federation, and a certified Workplace Restoration facilitator through the Workplace Fairness Institute. Tammy's work includes leadership development projects, team development and coaching, and executive coaching in a number of sectors. In her workplace restoration work, she builds trust with and engages front line staff, union and executives to move forward collaboratively and positively from negative experiences.



While she typically facilitates workplace restoration processes in person, given the unique circumstances of COVID-19, she is using technology to support leaders and HR professionals in whatever way best suits their circumstances and resources.

This guide was developed in collaboration with the Workplace Fairness Institute www.workplacefairness.ca

The focus of a WR process is to help people learn from and release the past, address and accept current challenges, and work together towards a future they want. The process helps workplaces get unstuck, come to new understandings and set new patterns for working together.



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Please get in touch to schedule
**a complimentary one-hour
consultation today.**