

NO GOSSIP

IMPLEMENTATION GUIDE

Nothing will kill your company faster than gossip. Negative talk destroys morale, damages trust and makes team unity nearly impossible to achieve. So how do you stop all the harmful chitchat? Many years ago, Dave instituted a no-gossip policy that still works amazingly well today. Naysayers and negative talkers don't have a home at Ramsey Solutions. It can be done! Here's how you can implement the same kind of policy at your company.

1. Go Slowly

At Ramsey Solutions, gossip is nonexistent. But this didn't happen overnight. When Dave decided to set this policy and make No Gossip a core value, there was *a lot* of communication with the team before the start date. If you simply walk in and hit your team members with this concept, it won't go well. In fact, your team will probably even gossip about it.

2. Look In the Mirror

Your first action step for shutting down gossip is taking a look at yourself. Are you guilty of talking negatively about another team member with someone who is not a leader? As the owner or leader of your company, your team watches everything you do and will naturally follow your example.

3. Share the Why

Implementing something that doesn't come naturally—people love to talk—won't be an easy transition. But by sharing the *why*, it can be accomplished. Rick Perry, our former executive director of HR, Culture, suggested you tell your team that gossip is toxic and damaging to people and the company. On the plus side, tell them erasing negative chatter creates a safe environment and a great place to work.

4. Define It

Once your team knows the why, you need to define exactly what gossip is. Our definition is: saying something negative about anyone or anything to someone who can't do anything about it. Team members don't tell each other about the bad stuff—they only tell their leaders. In fact, we follow a rule: Negatives go up, and positives go all around. You can create your own definition. Just make sure it's as simple as possible so everyone understands. You can come up with examples to make it even clearer.

Just keep in mind: This policy won't work if leaders don't act on the complaints or problems they receive. If someone brings a negative to you and you ignore it, you're destroying their trust and they'll end up handing in their resignation down the line.

5. Give Your Team Time

A successful no-gossip policy doesn't happen immediately. There will be mistakes, so you'll need to give grace for a set period of time. Tell your team you know it's not going to be perfect at first, but gossip is going to be taken seriously. If someone is caught talking negatively at Ramsey Solutions, they're given a warning. If there's another incident, they're fired.

6. Realize You're Going to Lose People

When you draw a hard line in the sand, like a no-gossip policy, there will be turnover. Team members may not be able to make the turn and will either leave on their own or get fired. Rick estimated about 10% will go. But in the long run, you'll be much better off.

7. Deputize Your Team

As a leader, you can't be the only one who's a cheerleader for banning gossip. You need to get your team fired up too. Let them know they're just as responsible for making the company a great place to work—somewhere they enjoy spending time every day. If they don't like gossip, they need to protect the policy.

By putting a zero-tolerance policy in place, you're showing your team you care about creating an awesome environment where Negative Nancys and Nathans are *never* welcome. It's well worth the investment in time, with the outcome being a happy company culture where people can thrive.



Great minds discuss ideas, average minds discuss events, small minds discuss people.

— Anonymous