

## Vermin In The Office

### Where Is Granny Clampett When You Need Her?

By Kendall C. Wright, President of Entelechy Training and Development, Inc.

Working in an office setting can be -- let's just say -- annoying. I've heard countless complaints about the habits, idiosyncrasies, and peccadilloes of coworkers and colleagues, all of which translates to loss efficiency, effectiveness and profitability.

It's commonly accepted that our physical environments impact our psychological welfare. Perhaps, the physical layout of the office contributes to people acting like small and exasperating rodents. From a distance, that maze of cubicles and offices looks exactly like a complex network of prairie dog burrows or woodchuck holes? Maybe that's it, maybe that's why the office these days seems to be overrun with vermin (destructive small animals that harm people, livestock, property, or crops and are difficult to control).

Where is Granny Clampett when you really need her? Most offices are populated by a cornucopia of critters perfect for her backwoods victuals. All in favor of purging the office of vermin signify by saying "Git-R-Done!"

What, exactly, would be the best way to fumigate your work space? Some have suggested constructing a very large bait box and disguising it as an elevator. Others have recommended replacing a bench in the sauna with a glue trap. Creatively, some have even tried to use electrical devices to send signals through the wiring to irritate the nervous systems of the pests.

Of course, when it comes to office vermin there is no magic potion or spell to cast them out. It takes some old-fashion communication to exterminate these critters. So if you're ready to be the office "critter-getter," take a look at a list of the usual suspects.

**Braxton the Beaver** – dams up every good idea and wants to horde all resources. Braxton is often characterized as being insensitive to what happens downstream. Braxton needs to be reassured that he is valued and shown the value of sharing information and resources with other team members.

**Sherri the Snake** – is double-tongued and double-minded. Because she's afraid of making commitments, her story is ever-changing. In the end, nothing can be blamed on her; it was everyone else who misunderstood the actual deliverable and its deadline. Sherri has to be made aware of the consequences of her "oscillation" and moved from mere verbal agreements to written confirmation.

**Baihut the Bat** – stays busy by swooping around everybody's workspace. Baihut has to understand that her frequent interruptions are costing the organization dearly. Experts say it takes anywhere from 15 to 20 minutes to fully recover from an interruption. Baihut may not see it, but her behavior is a major business liability. Show her the numbers so she can see for herself.

**Mary-Liz the Mole** – appears to always be on an information gathering mission. Mary-Liz has a need to feel important; she wants to be seen as an insider, and is not above giving away departmental "secrets" to satisfy her needs. It is probably better to handle Mary-Liz in a private setting away from her peers. However, she has to be held accountable for the impact of her behavior.

**Sue the Shrew** – has a shrill personality that is almost impossible to work with. Requests for cooperation often result in verbal combat. Sue is often in a bad mood and seems uninterested in doing anything not explicitly outlined in her job description. Sue has to be made aware of the interdependence of the team and the adverse impact of her interactions on team dynamics.

**Omar the Opossum** – plays dead when challenging work needs to be done. Omar is always too busy or as he says, "not yet ready for that type of project." Wake Omar up with a candid career development conversation. Odds are he understands "grow or go."

**Ravi the Rat** – works overtime to heavily populate the office with his friends. Whenever there's a posting, Ravi is guaranteed to have a friend who is just perfect for that job. Ravi must come to the understanding that friendship is not the corporate screening and selection seal of approval.

**Ramon the Raccoon** – is hyper risk-adverse. Every action must be analyzed and reevaluated until every spec of risk has been washed away. The self-imposed stress is taking a toll on Ramon (look at those dark rings around his eyes) and on the bottom line of the organization. Ramon has to learn that risk is integral to business.

**Steadman the Skunk** – is a real stinker, an out-of-control gossipmonger. Steadman's thrills come from spreading (often even creating) unflattering rumors and innuendos about his coworkers and leaders. No facts needed, just a creative mind and a cynical life perspective. The damage to the team will be irreparable if he's allowed to continue this behavior. In this case, the "tomato juice bath" is a direct accountability conversation.

There you have the lineup of the typical pests in offices across the land and around the globe. Odds are, you identified the guilty parties among your team.

The key to eradicating the vermin in the office is to make sure the office environment is not at all similar to their nature habitats. The office critter getter must model the leadership skill to identify, address and remedy any behaviors that distract from optimum performance. Your team's success rides on getting rid of the vermin in your office.

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