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Rumours at workplace are common, but while some rumours are not harmful, others can damage one's reputation and potentially affect productivity at the workplace. "In today's working milieu, gossip, rumours and speculations are rampant. It is a human tendency to know interesting information and be 'in the know'. However, it is only productive, if it is an encouraging, positive chit-chat to create excitement. It should not hamper the work culture or morale of any employee and hurt any individual or an organisation," says Aman Attree, HR head, Hindustan Powerprojects.

So how does one deal with rumours? Ashu Malhotra, HR head, Jabong.com suggests, "Spreading rumours is quite common in young organisations as compared to ones that are there since ages. One of the best ways to handle rumours is by not reacting impulsively. One should take time and react accordingly." Attree agrees, "If any rumour is damaging either your personal or professional life, just try to ignore it. The ideal way to ignore groundless rumours is a simple denial; however, if it is affecting your reputation or ability to do your job then it needs your attention. In this case, the first step should be addressing the key gossiper one-on-one at a confidential location,

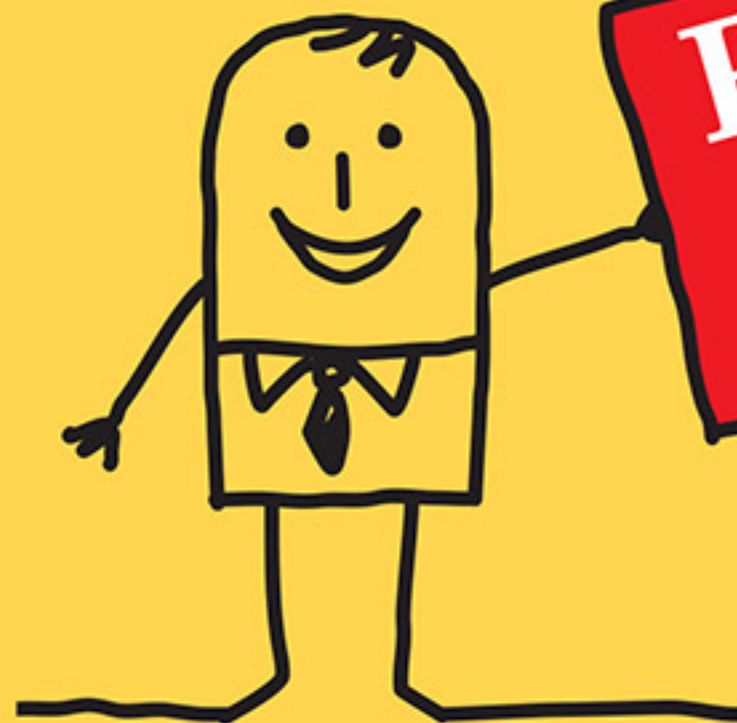
firmly, but civilly."

If the rumour is affecting one's productivity, Sakshi Gaba Dhawan, manager, HR at Koenig Solutions, suggests that one should speak out and clarify with the person spreading rumour. Communicate and sort things out if possible, otherwise ignore it and carry on with your work.

Rumours at work aren't likely to disappear. To understand what's going on, people talk to one-another. And, together, they fill in the holes in the story with a little bit of fact and a lot of guesswork. This builds a new story with bits and pieces added along the way, until there is a full-fledged rumour ready to spread all across.

It is important to understand that mostly, rumours come from people who are more focused on what's happening in others' lives, rather than being focused on their own work. If one hears something about one's colleague or manager, what one should do? "Managers sometimes have to take decisions in the best interest of the team and the company, which might not favour a certain few. Hence, there could be more rumours about the manager. But how one would deal with those depends on what kind of relationship they share with the manager. If you share a good rapport, then you can go talk it out to the manager, but it has to be done in a subtle manner," adds Malhotra.

Whether a rumour is true or not, the outcome of



Rumours can spread quickly, and often change shape as they spread. If not handled the right way, they can mar one's reputation

RUMOUR
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spreading it can be damaging. In such a situation, employers have a responsibility to foster a positive environment. "Rumours become rampant especially when an organisation is going through a merger, layoff or any big change which does not give complete clarity to employees as to what might come their way in times to come. The rumours leave employee feeling distrustful and insecure about self-interests. The most powerful way to prevent and respond to these events is to build up one's resilience in the first place. Nurturing a positive view helps negate a lot of rumours and avoid the impact on the personal front. However, realistic handling of this situation requires an employee to be more vigilant towards information shared by the management," says Tarun Katyal, CHRO, MTS India.

When it comes to workplace rumours, the best solution is to avoid demonstrating an interest.

KEEP SAFE DISTANCE FROM RUMOURS

- The focus should be on open and honest communication
- It's also important to build a culture of mutual respect and integrity
- When someone comes to you with an entertaining story, refuse to get involved
- To avoid rumours about the organisation, company can use newsletters, weekly meetings, or regular updates to let people know what's happening. When workers know what's going on within an organisation, they don't need to gossip
- Positive gossip can actually be good for the office environment if it serves as a motivator. But one should be careful that rumours do not create negative impact on any individual/organisation. Therefore, one should try to spread the positive ones and suppress the negative



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