

# Rise Above: How to Avoid Office Gossip

Stay focused on your job and out of office drama

by: Sarah Collins



It's tempting to gab with your co-workers to gain a friendship, but office gossiping is bad for business. "It wastes time. It's almost always hurtful," says Steve Albrecht, who runs a San Diego-based management consulting firm. "It can create huge issues about trust between people and teams." As an employee, do your best to walk away when co-workers engage in gossip, and as a manager, take measures to discourage this kind of talk between direct reports.

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## Keep Your Eye on the Prize

If you have a goal to be [promoted](#), get a raise or win a big project, engaging in office gossip isn't the path to take. Whenever you feel tempted to discuss the lives of your co-workers, take another glance at your job description and list of responsibilities or mentally review what you [hope to achieve](#), career-wise, in the next five years. Then, walk away from the person trying to engage you in gossip or change the topic. Return to your desk and get a head start on the most pressing task on your to-do list.

## Keep to Yourself

Keep yourself from being the topic of office gossip by revealing little personal information. You don't want to earn the reputation of office snob, so continue to enjoy small talk with your co-workers, but don't start the day with conversations about your church-going habits, romantic life or fight with your mother over the weekend. Keep conversations to facts about your current project, the weather or the latest football game. If someone wants to tell you gossip about a boss or co-worker and you can't get out of the conversation, keep all details that you've heard to yourself -- even if it ends up being true.

## Stay Positive

Rather than being thought of as the office gossip, position yourself to be thought of as the office morale booster. If a co-worker asks what you think about someone else, discuss that person's strengths in relation to being part of the team. If someone moves into gossip territory, try to flip the conversation to the latest good thing that person did at work. Jules Zurich, owner of Z Group Public Relations in Boise, Idaho, tells Kaitlin Madden, in a Career Builder.com article on CNN, that you should only bring up negative attributes about someone when absolutely necessary and keep it as impersonal as possible.

## Discourage Gossip as a Manager

If you have the authority to stop office gossip in its tracks, Forbes.com recommends meeting with the specific perpetrators one-on-one in closed-door meetings. Next, in a staff meeting, discuss the consequences of office gossip with the entire team rather than sending an all-staff email asking employees to stop gossiping. As a [manager](#), you also need to model the gossip-free behavior that your team should emulate.

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## The Perks of Positive Gossip

There's one form of gossip that need not be discouraged: the positive kind. This occurs in the form of stories about how another employee went above and beyond in helping a customer, achieved a specific goal or improved a product or idea. The perks of this, says Forbes writer Lisa Quast, is that it helps employees [feel proud](#), improves office morale and reduces overall turnover.

