

Workplace Violence & Security Risks: #TChat Preview

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"The Dark Side of Workplace Culture: Workplace Violence and Security Risks," the theme of this week's #TChat, is one we don't spend a whole lot of time thinking about until we're forced to by tragedy.

The reaction to workplace violence and security risk tends to be largely reactive, but the consequences demand organizations take proactive steps to preempt, and prevent, occurrences of what's sadly become a reality in our new world of work.



According to the [US National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health](#), 1 million workers are assaulted and 1000 are murdered every year from workplace violence; in fact, homicide is the leading cause of death for women in the workplace.

"The problem is that when some sort of violent outbreak does occur at work, we always hear things like, 'It was just a matter of time,' or 'We knew something like this was going to happen,' says Gary Lalicki, VP of Clinical Operations at [Health Management Systems of America](#), one of the nation's leading providers of [employee assistance programs \(EAPs\)](#). "Well, if that's the case, the question that has to be answered is, 'why didn't you tell anyone about this?'"

As Kevin Grossman writes in "[The dark side of Workplace Culture — workplace violence and security risks](#)", the reason is often related to an attitude of, "Don't ask, don't tell ... you don't want your employer to know for fear of losing your job. Employers don't want to know for fear of potential violence in the workplace."

"Employers have a legal duty to seek to identify and prevent everyone in the workplace from becoming victims of violence," says Lalicki. "Employees also have a responsibility to assist in keeping their environments safe and secure by reporting any behavior in others that may lead to incidents of violence."

According to Lalicki, these red flags include:

- **White collar males:** 91.6% of shootings on the job are committed by men; 38% of all shootings in workplace happened in "white collar" situations, making up 30% of all fatal shootings at work.
- **Laid Off:** 24% of workplace shooters were laid off or fired (although Lalicki says there's been no increase in workplace violence during the recent recession)
- **Loner:** A pathological blamer or complainer whose perpetual frustration has strained work relationships and reduced productivity
- **Sudden Changes:** A previously dependable, punctual and productive employee whose tardiness and absences begin to increase substantially; sudden change in health or hygiene
- **Relationships:** A coworker involved in a troubled, work-related romantic situation. 13% of shootings in the workplace involved a former or current intimate relationship.

The good news, Grossman writes, "today there are thankfully so many more resources available and more and more companies have workplace violence and/or intimate partner violence programs and/or EAPs (employee assistance programs)."

While most companies offer Employee Assistance Programs, these resources are often underutilized or misunderstood by employees.

"EAPs can help any employer group have a healthier workforce, but it's up to HR and Senior Leadership to develop training and communications which promote the company's employee assistance program," Lalicki says. "Companies need to stress that these resources are completely free, confidential, and most importantly, that these programs work."

Join #TChat tonight at 8 PM ET/5 PM PT as we discuss workplace violence and the solutions available for HRs, senior leaders and employees alike to prevent it. The good news is, just joining the conversation's an important first step.

"The big problem with workplace violence," says Lalicki, "Is that we're too afraid to talk about it. But the risks of not talking about it are a whole lot scarier."



#TChat Questions and Recommended Reading: 1.31.11

Here are the questions we'll be discussing, along with some background reading, to help prepare and inform the #TChat conversation. While this isn't mandatory to get in on tonight's #TChat action, we suggest checking out these articles by top career advice and talent management thought leaders to better understand workplace violence, security risks and how to prevent them:

Q1: How does everyday violence and security breaches affect workplace culture today?

Read: [When Violence Strikes the Workplace](#) by Sarah Needleman

Q2: How does your org address workplace violence during onboarding - and at other times?

Read: [Waking Up to the Risks of Workplace Violence](#) by Tucker Miller

Q3: What is HR's role in workplace violence intervention and prevention? Who else should be involved?

Read: [Keeping the Workplace Safe Amid Crisis](#) by Kate Rogers

Q4: If a colleague is threatened with violence at work from anyone, what should you do and why?

Read: [Workplace Violence: The 5 Most Important Tips Women Need to Know To Protect Themselves](#) by Lisa Quast

Q5: If you have an EAP, how do they provide workplace/domestic violence assistance?

Read: [Domestic Violence: Workplace Policies and Management Strategies](#) by Kim Wells (Executive Director, Corporate Alliance to End Partner Violence) and Stacey Pastel Dougan, Esq.

Research: [Domestic Violence Awareness Handbook](#) USDA Safety, Health & Employee Welfare Division

Q6: What are the most effective ways to minimize workplace incivility, bullying and violence?

Read: [Workplace Bullying: US Employers' Progress on Epidemic Problem](#) by Randi Barenholtz and Denise Kay, Esq., SPHR

Q7: Under OSHA, employers are responsible for providing a safe and healthy workplace. Discuss.

Read: [Employment Policies: Clean Up Your Compliance Act](#) by Melanie Berkowitz, Esq.

Q8: What is the role of leadership in addressing workplace violence when it occurs and before it occurs?

Read: [Leadership and Workplace Violence](#) by John Ikeda

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