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[Home](#) » [Book Talk](#) » **Summary and Review of Bad Apples: How to Manage Difficult Employees, Encourage Good Ones to Stay, and Boost Productivity by Brette Mcwhorter Sember and Terrence J. Sember**

[6](#)

[Summary and Review of Bad Apples: How to Manage Difficult Employees, Encourage Good Ones to Stay, and Boost Productivity by Brette Mcwhorter Sember and Terrence J. Sember](#)



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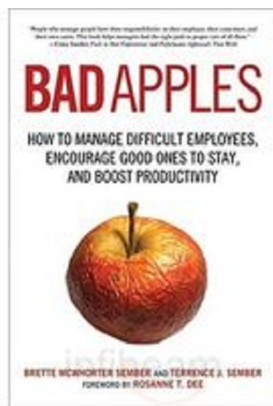
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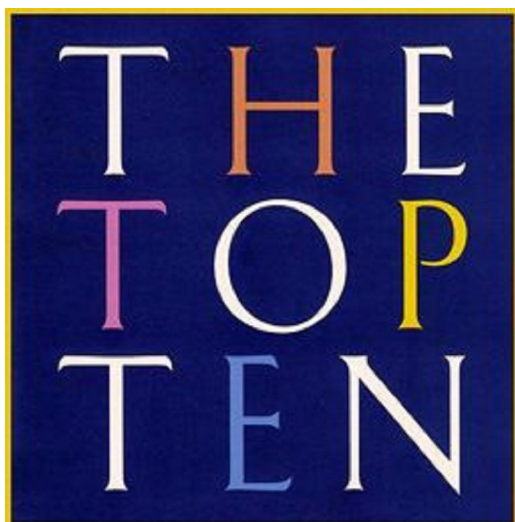
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This book summary and review of Bad Apples: How to Manage Difficult Employees, Encourage Good Ones to Stay, and Boost Productivity was prepared by Tana Compton while a Finance student in the College of Business at Southeastern Louisiana University.



Executive Summary

The book has lots to do with a manager's ability to find and control negative troublemakers in the work force. In completing this task, managers must evaluate all employees to insure whom the good apples and bad apples are. Throughout the book different types of behaviors of bad employees are given with different solutions on how to address each behavior. The goal of any manager is to not fire anyone; potentially a manager would like to find the cause of the certain negative behavior. In doing so the manager would then like to proceed in finding a way to change this behavior or channel it into something positive for the company. There are many steps in dealing with troubled employees on how to correct a problem, yet only three typical reasons as to why behavior is occurring. Generally the bad apple employee acts out in this demeanor to get something, attention usually being key. This potential employee is probably looking for a certain outcome, if the manager can evaluate this employee and find out what type of outcome the employee wants the manager can make arrangements so that all parties involved move in a positive direction. There also two other reason employees act out in such ways, one being for emotional reasons and the other being traits not recognized that are being executed. Another part of the book deals with focusing on good employees, too many times too much attention is given to something negative. The book wants managers to remember that in any sturdy foundation of a company it must start with good apples. The problem is that often the good apples aren't left with feelings of neglect due to bad apples, soon enough the bad apples too start portraying with negative behavior. Of course this is the worst case possible, providing that the whole company could potentially decrease productivity, the key role of a manager is is to increase this. So in order to keep a strong foundation to build on a manager must address the concern of motivating good apples. A manager can do this by simply focusing on team building, communication and encouraging positive attitude. The book ends with the last step any manager would want to do, indeed it be firing. It explains the proper way how to execute this procedure along with how to address the team in the aftermath. Overall the book merits great thoughts and ideas on how to promote positive attitude when such bad apples are exist.



The Ten Things Managers Need to Know from BAD APPLES

1. Definition of a Bad Apple: Generally speaking a bad apple is a person who lacks traits in the work place; such as



being a team player, cooperativeness, and positive attitude.

2. Types of Bad Apple: As many know already it's difficult to fit every individual into a certain type, therefore each individual should be looked at and identified according to specific personality traits. Noted in the book there are about 15 different types that can be easily identified, which will be detailed throughout the summary.

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3. Inherited Bad Apples: The biggest downside about acquiring a new management position is that there will always be a rotten apple from the start. Sometimes managers will have no control over these rotten apples, they must use evaluation skills to identify strengths and weaknesses of the rotten apple to enhance the performance.

4. Encouraging Bad Apples to become a Good Apple: In just about any business practice it's always easier to keep a bad employee and groom them to be better than go through the hiring process. Managers should make bad apple aware of the benefits and consequences of changed behavior.

5. Maintaining Good Apples: Never assume a good apple can never be spoiled. A manager's job should not always be focused on the negativity of the already bad apples; appreciation to current good apples will keep the core of the business thriving.

6. Disciplining Bad Apples: There should be rules, standard procedures, and expectations put in place that every team member is responsible for. After realizing some expectations, etc. aren't getting completed a manager; constructed criticism is the first step in disciplining, bad apple must know first hand manager is not happy with performance.

7. Throwing Away Bad Apples: There is a point when any manager can have a breaking point with a certain bad apple, generally that's when the bad apple should be fired. Generally a manager should allow for a grace period to hire someone new so the business isn't left in a bind, however sometimes things can't wait.

8. Promoting Positive Attitude for Good Apples: Number one job for a manager is to keep up positive attitudes, starting with self attitude, a manager's feelings about job carries through a team. A manager should actively participate in team building, setting a good example, along with making adjustments where best needed; new equipment, better location, and evaluating current policies.

9. Avoid Hiring New Bad Apples: Never be too quick to hire in hurry, a manager can sometimes be blinded and just settle. The hiring process should be replicated to every applicant to insure equal chances; the applicant that best fits in with the team is usually the best to hire.

10. Balancing the Apple Cart: Unfortunately life is never perfect, expect to have a bad apple lurking in the background at all times. Though it's important to remember to not let them take over, a manager's key role in business is to increase productivity, allowing a bad apple to stop that role can affect the manager's role to the company.



Full Summary of Bad Apples

Introduction: What is a Bad Apple?

Every organization is faced with at least one, every member has a chance to be influenced by one, and every person can become one, a bad apple that is. A bad apple usually has at least one of these three common characteristics, among more, creating constant trouble, not working effectively with others and being overly difficult. As a manager, one is given the task of figuring out who essentially meets this role inside the company. In order to effectively do complete this task a manager must create evaluations for all team members, remembering that every individual is unique. Meaning that no bad apple will just run up and notify one of itself and it's potential harm. Generally the manager must take certain steps in identify other behavior that goes along with this particular individual.

Types of Bad Apples

Certain behavior that a manager can expect to find to from a bad apple is following instructions wrong, argumentative, tardiness, leaving early, rudeness and inability to take directions consistently. Many times a bad apple has a hidden agenda, presuming to be someone in a particular setting, especially around the manager. Therefore another sign that will directly point to a bad apple is how interaction is around other co-workers or co-worker complaints. Still though sometimes a bad apple can effectively hide behavior traits that aren't easily recognizable. Presumably if there is any doubt, ask the question of is this person ultimately affecting the bottom line? A manager's job is to increase productivity for the company, if a bad apple is affecting the bottom line, its also affecting the manager's productivity levels.

After thinking a bad apple has been identified, there is one last evaluation task a manager should complete. A manger should beware to not confuse negative personal feelings about a person as a trait of a bad apple. Suggesting that managers must find professional judgment insight over making irrational decisions through personal opinions. The best possible way in doing this is to see if indeed the employee is bringing value to the company, even if the manager doesn't particularly enjoy the person's color of shoes.

Once identifying a bad apple, a manager's job then is to recognize which type of issue causes a person to act as a bad apple. Throughout the book there are a total of seventeen different issues named that can lead to a bad apple, but more could and do exist. In detail the issues will be discussed starting with the following:

Gossiper: The gossiper can potentially be either a blabbermouth or a rumor starter.

Backstabber: Usually try to under mind others by throwing others under the bus to only advance self.

Passive-Aggressive: Act in a stubborn and forgetful way without realizing the behavior.

Waster: Two types, a time waster and resource waster.

Narcissist: Only thinking of self and how much easier job can be if putting things off on other team members, generally passing all tasks onto others yet wanting to receive full credit.

Liar: Simple enough explanation someone who lies, note that the workplace liar never admits to lying.

Lazy Bones: Uses every short cut in the book to make eight steps into three.

Combatants: Challenges every procedure or statement within a team, making team eventually worn out.

Poisoner: Also known as a pessimistic, this person finds a problem with everything and can create negativity throughout entire staff.

Bully: Always has to have things a certain way and will criticize others to get accomplish this.

Slob: A person who is either messy in the office or appearance wise, either can cause mis-reputation of company.

Thief: Consists of stealing personal belongings or stealing other's ideas and using as own.

Whiner: Type of person who always ask why things have to be done a certain way, manipulating authority.

Unreliable: Always coming up short or coming up late with assigned duties.

Career Climber: While this person is a very self motivated individual unfortunately its only for one self to further career and not company.

Everyday Crisis: Tries to fool everyone into thinking personal drama is why job isn't getting done or tries to blow every small mishap into major problem.

Job Hater: Very much negative Nancy has no interest in growing company, just there to get paid essentially.

After identifying a direct issue or issues with a bad apple, a manager's job then is to try and correct the issue. Each issue to each individual may be handled differently, depending on the severity of issue. A good manager should try and point out the weakness and strength-ness in the issue and try to motivate that part before going to straight firing technique.

In most cases any promotion comes with previous employees, and chances are there some bad apples waiting. When in this predicament not to bomb-bared changes amongst everyone right away. This will not be an effective procedure especially if bad apples with negativity exist. A good choice in completing this task is evaluating once again, find out what makes the team, bad apple, good apples motivated. Once learning this, try to incorporate that motivation with a changing procedure. Keep in mind this will not happen over night; people will not automatically respect the new manager. The manager must earn that respect through setting examples, new realistic goals and creating relationships with new employees.

Motivating Bad Apples to Become Good

Changing a person's habits and traits will always be a task hard to complete for anyone, so encouragement is important. The manager should be able to have conversation with the bad apple employee and really conquer an understanding as to why this person acts out. Every behavior exhibited is motivated by something, this be any where from releasing emotions, certain actions leading to certain outcomes, or even traits that are not controllable. Its very important that the manager be able to identify the cause of the bad apples actions because this will lead the manager in the best procedure of how to take control this action. An example if this would be if an employee has a poisoner type behavior, constantly sabotaging in any new idea or procedure. This employee could be acting this way due to the desire of wanting to have control of something. An effective way to use this negative behavior and turn it to a positive one would be allowing the employee to head up a new task.

Other ways that a manager may be able to encourage bad apples to becoming good apples could be through rewards. Rewards could include anything from extra responsibility, compliments, promotions and paid raises. Of course a manager shouldn't award any negative behavior; the manager should only award if employee is actively

trying to change behavior. Along with creating awards for good behavior the manager should also create consequences for the bad behavior. No one should be allowed to have a free ride, and think that just because no participation in changing occurs, no action will be taken place to punish will happen. For some employees consequences can be more effective in changing behavior than actual rewards. Consequences can include write-ups, public embarrassment, loss of responsibilities, demotions and the worst termination.

Ultimately a manger would like to always correct bad behavior over having to fire someone and hiring someone new. Therefore the manager needs to bring up the negative behavior to the bad apple, allowing for the bad apple to recognize that this behavior is no longer acceptable. The manager then needs to have a plan of action, a plan of improvement, and plan for the worst. Worst of course would be if the employee doesn't show in any effort in improving or is just not improving enough to where the manager then would have to fire that employee. One of the most important actions though is that the manager in whatever plan is set is followed through. If a manager can't follow through in firing, this could potentially set a repeated in failure in manager's job performance.

Maintaining Good Apples

Unfortunately in life negative actions are given much more attention than positive ones. This is also very much true in the work force today, and while this will more than likely be true forever a manager needs to create some focus to one recognizing good behavior as well. Some employees crave attention, if a person isn't actively getting the attention needed doing the right thing, doing the wrong thing will be the next way about getting it. The other risk a manager faces is losing good apples to bad apples; peer pressure will be present even after the days of high school. In this predicament a manager should also focus on maintaining good apples. A manager can do this by taking these actions, make connections, make advancements options, training, rewarding good behavior, praising, keeping up good morale, and communication.

Disciplining Bad Apples

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The down side of being a manger is discipline, disciplining bad apples can be worst too. Once repeated offering to help a troubled employee is getting no where, and before coming to terms with having to fire a employee, a manager should try using discipline to getting employee back on track. Threats are usually one dealt with this procedure, however its not always the most appropriate. Make sure empty threats aren't being thrown out to just fear an employee. The employee will eventually figure out that the threat isn't real, living the manager looking like a liar and hollow. Make actions attended on keeping, avoid using hostile language or tones, correct in private, and keep a paper trail on issues brought up.

Ditching Bad Apples

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After disciplining and getting no immediate decent response, the next step will be firing. There are few steps in helping a manager come to terms with what must happen to this spoiled apple. Prepare in having all legal paperwork completed with human resources department before termination meeting. Evaluate how the firing of this employee will affect the company, the staff, and the manager personally. Create a plan in dealing with the aftermath of the firing, hiring someone new, promoting some one or handing our extra job responsibilities. All things completed the manager will then need to proceed with the termination meeting. In the meeting the manager should use correct tone, demeanor, avoid beating around the bush, be straightforward and don't allow employee to intimidate. A manager should make termination reason very clear and direct for employee while making it immediately, and should collect in company property before last paycheck is given. Once termination is completed, manager should not discuss reasons of termination with other employees but should verify that termination has been executed.

Create a Positive Work Environment

Just as bad attitude can pass on to other employees, positive attitude can too, so make sure the manager always has one. Best way to create manager respect is leading by example, in doing this the manager should take every opportunity to act in the most positive way even at the worst times. A manager should not act but create team building, set up communication and interaction. No company should always just work hard; encourage humor in the right time and place. Also a manager should try preventing arguments before starting or escalation, this will keep team's focus on meeting expectations and working not the office drama. A manager should create certain activities that are easy for everyone to participate in, favorite shirt day. The manager's other responsibility in creating positive team attitudes would be being the team's biggest ally. Making sure the physical environment for the team is safe, spacious, having enough resources and good maintenance is extremely important. Any of the previous stated

environments that are up to date can cause sluggish team effort in productivity.

Avoid Hiring Bad Apples

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Just getting one bad apple out the door only for another one to replace it is not the perfect idea. When hiring someone new a manager needs to be cautious, bad apples need jobs too and usually in the most abundant supply. Here are a few tools in which a manager should use in replacing the bad apple, first is job description. Before notifying of hiring, first thing a manager needs to do is sit down and do research on what exact requirements must this person have, what the company needs and traits that a good apple will have. The second tool to use is good sense to where to find new applicants. This could include using a friend of someone personally known or using friends of team members, and maybe promoting within the company.

Once elimination of some applicants, and deciding on a number of interviewees have a procedure on the interview process. Making initial contact and the response to that initial contact in the business world is just about as important as first impressions. A manager should evaluate how timely the response was and friendly, this alone can determine how serious of candidate this person is about wanting this job. The next step would be the actual interview and the questions presented. In the interview the manger first needs to begin interview with questions about education, previous employments and responsibilities other than stated on application. A manager should avoid yes or no questions and look for questions that interviewee can elaborate using examples. An example is a personal insight of what a person has experienced, a manager can get a much more clearer look at who this person is and how work skill is. The last step in an interview is doing homework, make sure to check references, this could be difference between Bob and Jill.

After interview is completed it is then up to the manager to make a decision, try and go with gut feeling. Also a manager should give these statements some though process to such as: experience in a similar job or industry, pleasant personality, ability to benefit company through contacts, and go-getter attitude. When the decision is made the manager needs help get the new employee off to a good start, which can include training, introduction to other employees, setting expectations. Its very important manager isn't overly nice to new employee, not wanting to water down expectation of job nor wanting to waste money into training if not able to perform.

Conclusion

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Lastly, a manager needs to balance and accept things won't always be perfect. There will always be constant potential for an employee to become a bad apple. The important thing to remember is how to handle the situation without risking the manager's job. Increased productivity is key, if productivity is failing due in adequate performance of a bad apple that a manager has continued to not deal with, the manager will be at fault. The best advice is to not let anyone get to comfortable with expectations including manager itself.



The Video Lounge

In this particular clip, it identifies one of the chapters inside of the book of dealing with difficult employees, the clip will provide a real life example of a bad apple type employee.

Personal Insights

Why I think:

- With business conditions today, what the author wrote is – or is no longer true – *because*:

In today's business world the author's book would be very true. I think this especially because of current economic standing in the U.S. Our country is suffering from high unemployment rates, that only seem to be increasing monthly. With that being said, any good job is in high demand, making a manager's job easier to fire someone and find a replacement the very next day. Basically every manager should actively be completing evaluations of their current teams members, if someone is showing more than enough traits to identify them, as a bad apple then there is someone else willing to be a good apple. Another good example of why the book is relevant today is because many companies are downsizing and eliminating employees they don't need or who aren't increasing productivity. Any employee should be an active model of a good apple to save their job.

- If I were the author of the book, I would have done these three things differently:

1. I would have chosen to either eliminate the different heading sizes or complete the entire book with an outline form.

2. There are many case study examples throughout the book, for more effective reading, it would have been nice to see those at the end of the chapters.

3. The last chapter, conclusion of whole book while is direct is very short, merely two pages. I think it would have been nice to see the author elaborate more on the continued process of balancing the apples.

- Reading this book made me think differently about the topic in these ways:

1. Allowing continued inadequate performance from one person can affect a whole company.

2. There will always be negativity in a company, important to channel the negativity into strength; criticism isn't always a bad thing.

3. Sometimes becoming overwhelmed with trying to fix bad apples, more are created due to lack of appreciation or attention. Once negative actions get more attention, assumptions will be made to act that way subconsciously.

- I'll apply what I've learned in this book in my career by:

1. I think its important to evaluate individuals more, while evaluations do take up lots of time, it seems the more information collected the better managing skill to identify with a certain person.

2. As a manager make sure to set a proper example, above any negative employee, a manager has the most influence.

3. Increased productivity is a key role, when someone is trying to make that unattainable and succeeds its best to let that person go.

- Here is a sampling of what others have said about the book and its author:

▷ " Being able to climb the career ladder means all managers must learn how to handle employees who are 'bad apples.' Finally, here is a book that takes the mystery out of dealing with difficult employees. The book provides easy-to-follow steps for identifying and dealing with bad apples and is a must read for anyone wanting to get into management, anyone who is a new manager, or anyone currently in management who is trying to deal with difficult employees."

Lisa Quast, award-winning author, "Your Career, Your Way!"

▷ All too often managers are left to fend for themselves when it comes to managing their staff. Managing Bad Apples makes coexisting with the 'problem child' employee easier by delivering simple practical guidance to the novice and the expert manager.

David Lewis, President of OperationsInc – Human Resources Consulting

▷ This book helps managers decide what the right course of action is-whether it means chastising negative behavior, encouraging positive outlooks, separating certain folks, creating teams for success, giving employees warnings, and/or firing the ones who are pretty much rotten through and through. This book is essential reading for any manager looking to ensure a pleasant, productive-and fruitful-work environment

Adams Business Publisher-imprint of Adams Media

All three reviews of the book put emphasis on how much this book addresses the bad employee. The bad employee is too little addresses in the books of business and not much said on which steps to take on identifying the bad apple. Also the three summaries suggest reading the book for any new manager.

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Quast, Lisa. (2010, May 15). http://www.brettesember.com/books_bad_apples.asp

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Biography

David C. Wyld (dwyld.kwu@gmail.com) is the Robert Maurin Professor of Management at Southeastern Louisiana University in Hammond, Louisiana. He is a management consultant, researcher/writer, and executive educator. His blog, Wyld About Business, can be viewed at <http://wyld-business.blogspot.com/>. He also serves as the Director of the Reverse Auction Research Center (<http://reverseauctionresearch.blogspot.com/>), a hub of research and news in the expanding world of competitive bidding. Dr. Wyld also maintains compilations of works he has helped his students to turn into editorially-reviewed publications at the following sites:

- Management Concepts (<http://toptenmanagement.blogspot.com/>)
- Book Reviews (<http://wyld-about-books.blogspot.com/>) and
- Travel and International Foods (<http://wyld-about-food.blogspot.com/>).



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6 Comments



1. [shakugan123](#)
Posted November 18, 2010 at 4:57 pm
a very long article yet very interesting.Bad apple contaminates to. It will spread its rotten cells. Good review.I am sure many of us will find it helpful to decontaminate a bad apple and produce a delicious apple pie out of it.



2. [Mr.Reggie](#)
Posted November 18, 2010 at 8:16 pm
Excellent Write!



3. [loveps87](#)
Posted November 19, 2010 at 1:30 am
It is a bit long but intersing shar



4. Charles Casselberry
Posted November 22, 2010 at 1:28 pm
I really like how this goes into detail about defining different types of bad apples and how to deal with them. I recommending this book to my boss after reading this review.



5. [wonderful12](#)

Posted November 22, 2010 at 1:43 pm

I think your article is very good, the human capital of a company is very important and should be used efficiently



6.

Thomas C

Posted November 28, 2010 at 9:21 pm

I never thought about channeling one's negativity into creativity. It is always important to remember that criticism isn't always a bad thing, but something people should use to improve upon.

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