



*For you, your career, and your life*

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## Humility vs. Arrogance: Which Wins in the Workplace?

Raise your hand if you have ever worked with an arrogant person. When organizational and industrial psychologist Stan Silverman asks audiences to do this, almost every hand goes up.

Arrogance in the workplace is widespread, yet until recently there hasn't been a way to measure it. Silverman, associate provost and dean at the University of Akron Summit College and fellow researchers are changing that.

Workplace arrogance can have an impact on an organization's morale and its bottom line. In an educational or hospital setting, arrogant behavior can make life miserable for colleagues and subordinates while it escapes the notice of superiors.

"Arrogant people are more than willing to take credit for their successes, but not their

failures," Silverman notes. "They get angry when their ideas are criticized, and they tend to put their personal agendas ahead of organizational objectives."

### Different from self-confidence

Arrogance differs from self-confidence, Silverman notes. "We all want to work with people who are self-confident. Nurses, residents and patients can respect physicians who are confident, and have no problem following them."

But when a physician or other leader crosses the line from self-confidence into arrogance, there's a different set of perceptions, Silverman explains. "People have far less respect for an arrogant person. They don't like working with them. They may not want them to get ahead. And they may even do things to help them fail."

### Quantifying arrogance

Defining and measuring arrogant behavior and its negative impact in the workplace is the first step in curtailing it. In their research for the study "Arrogance: A Formula for Failure," Silverman and co-authors defined arrogance as a set of behaviors.

*The same behaviors that won you a place in your residency program may not be the ones that help you excel in your career. Getting feedback from another professional can help you assess how you come across, and motivate you to make changes if they're needed. Whether you're dealing with issues that challenge your ability to cope or seek to develop personal skills to complement your medical knowledge, RAP is here to help. We are your confidential resource, free for the asking. Our caring professionals are just a phone call away.*

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"These behaviors communicate an inflated sense of superiority, which is often accomplished by disparaging others," says Silverman. "Behaviors differ from personality traits in that they can be changed. Yet one of the markers of the arrogant person is an unwillingness to accept feedback. So we saw that we needed to come up with a measurement to quantify arrogance."

The Workplace Arrogance Scale (WARS) Silverman and colleagues developed helps organizations obtain empirical data. Using the scale, the researchers have been able to show that the more arrogant a person is, the more self-centered and less agreeable they are likely to be. The data also shows that the higher the level of arrogance, the lower the job performance. That correlation goes against the stereotype of the brilliant-but-



"Humility is to make a right estimate of oneself."

*-Charles H. Spurgeon*

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## Money Matters

### Financial Readiness: Don't Be Caught Without a Plan During Hurricane Season

As hurricane season continues, you may be more than ready with extra food and water for people and pets, fully charged batteries and mobile devices, evacuation plans, backup generator and other precautions. Perhaps you've considered how to deal with the possibility of storm surges, high winds, tornadoes and flooding. But are you financially prepared? For example, do you have a written inventory of your possessions, along with photos or a video? Do you have multiple copies that are kept in separate, secure locations?

This is one of various helpful tips from the Federal Trade Commission, the nation's consumer protection agency, in "Financial Readiness: As Important as Fully Charged Batteries." To learn more, go to <http://www.ftc.gov/bcp/edu/pubs/consumer/alerts/alt170.shtm>. For more tips on financial management during hurricane season, check out the FTC's Web page on hurricane recovery: <http://www.ftc.gov/bcp/edu/microsites/recovery/hurricane/index.html>. Both of these FTC resources have links to other government agencies for general tips on hurricane planning.

*The FTC offers free information on a variety of consumer topics. Additional resources for managing your finances and investments can be found at [www.munizandassociates.com](http://www.munizandassociates.com)*

*Julio C. Muniz, a Certified Financial Planner (CFP) and a Chartered Life Underwriter (CLU). Muniz and Associates, 813-258-0033.*

## Humility vs. Arrogance *continued*

arrogant individual whose behavior is tolerated because he or she is thought to be a star performer.

These measurements, linked with performance feedback, can help organizations begin to address the harmful effects of arrogance, and answer the question "why should I change my behavior?" with hard evidence.

### Stuck working with an arrogant person?

If you have a peer with arrogant behavior, Silverman suggests a discussion that begins: "I want us to have a good working relationship. Let's talk about some ideas that will help us work better together."

When you are working with a difficult individual in a superior position, remember that this person isn't receptive to feedback, Silverman says. "The best thing you can do is make sure your role is very clear. Emphasize the importance of the team and the organization's objectives."

### Humility for better leadership

"Our study results show that there may be advantages for organizations that encourage positive behaviors such as humility," says Silverman. "Humility can be the antidote to arrogance. Humble individuals have a different personal orientation. They don't act as if they are superior to others. They're willing to see themselves accurately, and they want to know what their weaknesses are. Showing humility is not a sign of weakness—it's a trait we want our leaders to have. Humility prevents excessive self-focus, and allows a leader to develop better relationships with employees."

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### Top Ten Arrogant Behaviors

1. Believes that he/she knows better than everyone else in any given situation
2. Makes decisions that impact others without listening to their input
3. Uses non-verbal behaviors like glaring or staring to make people uncomfortable
4. Criticizes others
5. Belittles his/her employees publicly
6. Asserts authority in situations when he/she does not have the required information
7. Discredits others' ideas during meetings and often makes those individuals look bad
8. Shoots down other people's ideas in public
9. Exhibits different behaviors with subordinates than with supervisors
10. Makes unrealistic time demands on others

*Excerpted with permission from "Workplace Arrogance Scale" Russell E. Johnson, Stanley B. Silverman, Aarti Shyamsunder, Hsien-Yao Swee, O. Burcu Rodopman, Eunae Cho & Jeremy Bauer (2010): Acting Superior But Actually Inferior?: Correlates and Consequences of Workplace Arrogance, Human Performance, 23:5, 403-427 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/08959285.2010.515279>*

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