

# ONE ARTICLE CAN RUIN A CAREER

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By Jamie Herman

The title says it all, and I understand that, but it's a topic I believe we need to address. The beauty of my writing this article is that if you don't agree, you can heckle me at future classes...which is always fun. It may help to know that as I write this article, I am flying to a NRWA meeting and the turbulence is horrendous.

In my opinion, it's time we talk about taking care of ourselves as well as our family, friends, and coworkers...you know by making sure you and others are in a good place mentally and emotionally. There it is, right? The elephant in the room. A lot of things have changed in the last few years, many of us have reset our priorities, many have struggled with personal loss, economic loss, changes to their employment or career path, and are just trying to "get back to normal". At this point I think of my good friend Dan recently telling the class I was instructing during a break, "I always thought Jamie was a BLEEP, but he puts in the effort and is alright". You know what, coming from him that was a huge compliment and it really meant a lot, thanks Dan!

A couple of years ago I lost a friend and family member, great guy, a real friend to everyone he met. You see, we weren't aware of his "internal" struggles, he "seemed" fine, but he made the decision to take his own life. It's probably common after a tragedy like this, but we all asked ourselves, "how could this happen", "why didn't I notice a problem". I was pretty upset with myself, maybe if I had stopped to chat, or bust his chops...that's what we do with friends, right? In the past 3 years I have witnessed many friends, coworkers, and member's struggle. Sometimes a kind word, a little show of support, or just checking on them will make a difference in their life at that moment. I'm certainly no expert, but I do know we all have good days and bad days, and it sure helps to have a person who cares enough to check on you during those bad days.

We recently lost a retired circuit rider, Dan Tousley. I couldn't help but ask myself how many times I had seen or talked to Dan since he retired. Guess what, the answer is, not enough. I haven't made the time to see Pat, Doug, Fred or Valerie either. Always too busy, I guess. We are all guilty, am I right? I believe in working hard, achieving goals, and honest day's pay for an honest day's work. But we also need to make the time for those who are important in our lives. I promise Doug, we will have lunch this spring...your treat!

I believe that employees are any businesses greatest asset. Generally, a great deal of time and money is involved in training new and existing employees so they can perform at the highest level of competence and efficiency. However, as supervisors we need to remember to step back once in a while to try to view decisions and policies from our employee's perspective. In my opinion, most issues are due to a lack of communication. A good supervisor needs to clearly express why a decision or policy is made, and how it will impact their role. Failed communication will almost always cause issue and force employees to speculate as to why management

implemented a decision or policy. Employees who believe their employer or supervisor actually care and provide the best work environment, as well as the best benefits and salary possible will almost always remain loyal to the company.

In this day and age where it is so difficult to recruit, train and retain good employees, providing a healthy work environment is crucial. Do you provide personal and professional advancement, training, and a positive atmosphere? Do your employees know they are valued? These are all keys to retention and longevity. Now, I'm certainly not the best at recognizing the needs of our staff here at the NYRWA. But I do work hard to be better at it each and every day. Our staff are vital to our mission in providing the very highest level of training and technical assistance. You, our members, value the long serving staff we have and in most cases, you have built a sense of confidence in their abilities. The same is true for each of you and the way your customers view your service. You simply cannot replace 25+ years of trust and dedicated service overnight. I know I'm speaking to the choir here, but please look out for your employees, give them a "pat on the back" when deserved, it will likely pay huge rewards in the future.

I wish to congratulate Steve Winkley, our friend, and Source Water Protection Specialist, on his recent retirement. Steve helped so many communities over the years, and always provided the highest level of service and expertise with his projects. Steve retired on January 6th after nearly 28 years of dedicated service to this association and our membership. We thank you Steve, and we wish you and Carol a happy and healthy retirement...very well-deserved!

Last, I wish to thank Florence Braunius, our longtime Board Director, who served every role on the board over her 22 years of service. Florence was always a voice of reason but would also question decisions in an effort to serve our members. Our members needs were always her first and highest priority, and her leadership helped guide this association to success. Thank you, Florence, but your work here is not quite done. You may see Florence around this spring and summer as she will be attending community activities across the state to educate citizens on protecting their private well systems. With Florence retiring from our Board of Directors, we welcome new director Richi Horne from the Village of Hobart. Richi has been dedicated to our industry for many years, she has been involved in recertification training, and she believes in supporting our mission and membership. We look forward to having Richi join our team and value her input as we move forward.

To Steve and Florence, thank you for providing...Quality on Tap! 💧💧💧

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