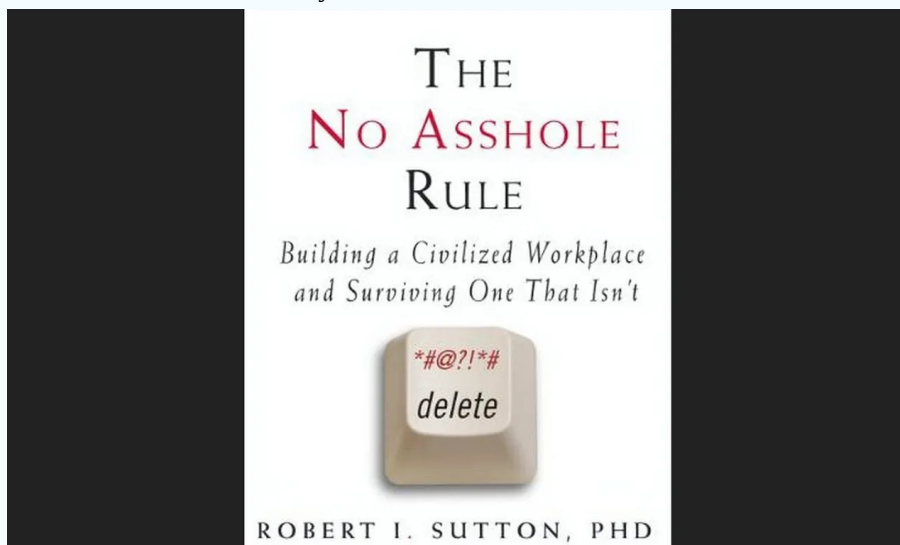


ite sayings - which still this holds true.



What is the “No Asshole Rule”? Glad you asked!



In 2007, Dr. Robert Sutton wrote the classic book titled “[The No Asshole Rule: Building a Civilized Workplace and Surviving One That Isn't](#)”. It can all be summed up in a few simple statements.

Basically, avoid assholes at all costs, no matter how rich or powerful they might be. That being around an asshole is contagious. That chronic exposure to such nastiness will eventually rub off. Because such behavior is an “emotional contagion” - the odds are that if a company hires assholes, the corporate culture will become toxic. If a corporate culture becomes toxic due to assholes, it can be very difficult if not impossible to change.

The back part of the book is about how to survive having to work for or with assholes without becoming one yourself. In Dr. Sutton’s opinion, assholes are bullies, creeps, jerks, tyrants, tormentors, despots, backstabbers and egomaniacs.

When I first read this book over a decade ago, I was just in the midst of having to work intensely with some extreme assholes. Luckily, it was a consultancy position. This book gave me the courage to end the consultancy relationship. I learned that I don't have to put up with assholes and as a consultant, I have the power to "let go" of (ergo fire) my clients. That is freedom.

But I learned something else too, along the road to finding balance. I don't have to suffer assholes in my personal life either. Knowing when to walk away is a great defense of one's own psyche. Unfortunately, the "no asshole rule" falls down somewhat on social media. We can't fire the trolls and disagreeable personality types. On twitter and other spaces, the internet "bullies, creeps, jerks, tyrants, tormentors, despots, backstabbers and egomaniacs" abound. Even worse, they can behave in this way and build an audience as well as make money by attacking others. This feeds into a mob mentality, where many people get their little dopamine hit by participating in various on-line "stonings". They allow their inner asshole to come out, and have found a certain perverse and evil power through these interactions.

I think everyone has witnessed someone getting attacked by a mob on social media. It is no fun. It is hard not to want to strike back.

This is why I don't tolerate assholes on the comments section of these Substack essays. This is one place on the internet that I can control. Note - I can't say for sure how many people I have "unsubscribed." However, I have been writing this Substack for almost 1.5 years, and the number is less than ten people. By not allowing assholes to make comments, I have not had a contagion issue. Fun fact is that the majority of the people that I have unsubscribed (with a prorated refund) have then gone on to be both prolific commenters on the "hate and gossip" type Substacks, or have even gone on to form their own "hate and gossip" themed Substacks.

This is why I am very careful in my own consulting business, and why I actively protect the one social media space that I can control - the comments section on this Substack. This is also one

reason that I only allow paid subscribers to comment. Only a few people actually want to pay a bit of money each month to be a troll.

Building a Civilized Community

The following paragraph, which can be found near the conclusion of the “No Asshole Rule” book, struck home with me.

Think about the times when you were that guy at the counter, when you were that asshole in the story. I wish I could say that I have never been that gyy, but that would be a bald-faced lie, as I’ve confessed at several junctures in this book. If you want to build an asshole free environment, you’ve got to start by looking in the mirror. When have you been an asshole? When have you caught and spread this contagious disease? What can you do, or what have you done, to keep your inner asshole from firing away at others?

The more powerful single step you can take is to follow “da Vinci’s rule” and just stay away from nasty people and places. This means you must defy the temptation to work with a swarm of assholes, regardless of a job’s other perks and charms. It also means that if you make this mistake, get out as fast as you can. And remember, as my student, Dave Sanford taught me, that admitting you’re an asshole is the first step.

We are all given only so many hours here on earth. Wouldn’t it be wonderful if we could travel through our lives without encountering people who bring us down with their demeaning remarks and actions?

...If you are truly tired of living in Jerk city - if you don’t want every day to feel like a walk down Asshole Avenue - well, it’s your job to help build and shape a civilized workplace. Sure you already know that. But isn’t it time to do something about it?

I go a step farther than the author, it is our job to help build and shape a civilized life, as well as a civilized on-line community. But surely we already know that.

But how to build such a community?

Below are some of the recommended Top Steps for Enforcing the No Asshole Rule

(Some of these steps have been added or modified for use in everyday and on the internet).

Don’t tolerate assholes online or in your life, if you can help it.

Assholes will hire other assholes. Assholes will attract other assholes. Being an asshole is contagious.

Being an asshole is addictive. On the internet, addictive personality types are drawn to being trolls. The multiple little dopamine hits that assholes can get by being nasty day after day can add up into a full-time addiction. Someone who is chronically being an asshole (particularly on the internet), is most likely feeding or boosting their dopamine receptors.

Get rid of assholes fast. On the internet, this comes often comes down to blocking “trolls” and disagreeable people promptly, as well as avoidance of sites that traffic in content from assholes.

Try not to read or migrate to internet sites that are nasty, because they will infect you. Being an asshole is contagious.

“Power breeds nastiness. Beware that giving people—even seemingly nice and sensitive people—even a little power can turn them into big jerks. (RWM: a little power to hurt people on social media feeds many a troll).

“Embrace the power-performance paradox. Accept that your life (and organizations in your life) do have and should have a pecking order, but do everything you can to downplay and reduce unnecessary status differences among members. The result will be fewer assholes and, according to the best studies, better overall performance, too.

Manage moments—not just practices, policies, and systems. Effective asshole management means focusing on and changing the little things that you and your people do—and big changes will follow. Reflect on what you do, watch how others respond to you and to one another, and work on “tweaking” what happens as you are interacting with the person in front of you right now.

“Model and teach constructive confrontation. Develop a culture where people know when to argue and when to stop fighting and, instead, gather more evidence, listen to other people, or stop whining and implement a decision (even if they still disagree with it). When the time is ripe to battle over ideas, follow Karl Weick’s advice: *fight as if you are right; listen as if you are wrong.*

The bottom line: link big policies to small decencies. Effective asshole management happens when there is a virtuous, self-reinforcing cycle between the “big” things that organizations do and the little things that happen when people talk to one another and work together.”

Modified from: Sutton, Robert I.. The No Asshole Rule (pp. 80-81). Grand Central Publishing. Kindle Edition.