

HOW TO DEAL WITH ENERGY VAMPIRES



Over the years I've heard many stories from people who read "The Energy Bus" about how they dealt with Energy Vampires. Some successfully transformed them. Others let them go so they could no longer sabotage the team. And some unfortunately abused their power by labeling anyone who disagreed with them an Energy Vampire. I've learned a lot from these people and have garnered lessons from their successes and mistakes. In this spirit I wanted to share some thoughts about how to deal with an Energy Vampire (EV):

- First and foremost, love them. No one really wants to be an Energy Vampire. He/she is likely negative for a reason. The first step should always be to love, understand and transform. For example, Martin, from the company Seventh Generation, told me that he put a sign on his door that said "Energy Vampires Welcome. Expect to be filled up with positive energy."
- While I love Martin's approach, I also know from personal experience and the work I do with teams and organizations that not every EV is willing to change. If your efforts to transform an EV are not successful and they are sabotaging the team and organization then they should be let off the bus.
- If you don't like the thought of letting people off the bus, you are not alone. That's why I always tell leaders and managers that you won't have to let EV's off the bus if you create a positive culture where EV's are uncomfortable being negative. If you create a strong, positive culture that attracts positive people, fosters positive communication and generates positive energy, the EV's who are unwilling to change will walk off the bus themselves because they don't fit in. Energy Vampires don't like the light.
- The best way to deal with Energy Vampires in your organization is at the cultural level where you set the expectation that people who drain the energy of others will not be tolerated. One college football coach did this with his football team a few years ago. He had all his players read "The Energy Bus" and had an artist draw a huge picture of an Energy Vampire on the wall of their team meeting room. Any time a player was being an EV they put the player's picture on the wall. No one wanted to be on the wall. In essence, the coach was telling his team that we

will not allow negativity to sabotage our team and goals. While I don't recommend business leaders and school principals utilize the Energy Vampire on the wall strategy, I do believe they must make it clear that negativity that drains others and sabotages team performance is not acceptable. Leaders/managers/coaches/principals must create a positive work environment where their people can do their best work without being affected by an EV.

- If you are not a leader or manager and you're not in a position to define the culture or hire and fire people, you are likely wondering what you should do if you have an EV on your team or in your office. In this case, you can influence your team and office culture by sharing The Energy Bus with your manager/leader and encouraging them to utilize it to create a positive culture. I've witnessed many organizational transformations simply because an employee shared The Energy Bus with a leader and the leader invited everyone on the bus. Please know I'm not trying to be promotional here. People tell me all the time that The Energy Bus is an effective tool that creates a common language for organizations to talk about and address negativity. Since it's a tool that works, I believe in helping others use it.
- If you are not a manager or leader and you have EV's on your team or in your office it's also important that you decide to be more positive than the negativity your face. A simple rule is: Your positive energy must be greater than all the negativity.
- If you encounter Energy Vampires in your daily life remember Gandhi's words: "I will not let anyone walk through my mind with their dirty feet." (Neither should you)
- If you have a personal friend or a friend at work who is an EV you may decide to talk to them about their negativity. If you have a strong relationship with them and they know you care about them, they may be open to your advice. But remember Energy Vampires can't see their own reflection. They may not realize they are an Energy Vampire. Proceed with caution if you decide to go this route. And if you do, do it with love.
- If you have a neighbor that is an EV and it's one of those days where you just don't want their negativity to impact you, run away as fast as you can when you see them. Just say you have something in the oven. :)

Finally, if you have Energy Vampires lurking in your family I recommend you become a positive force of positive energy that demonstrates to others what real positivity, in the form of love, patience, kindness, and care, looks like. Honestly it's something I'm still working on myself. It's not easy but it's worth the effort.

How do you deal with an Energy Vampire?