



The Sting of Betrayal by an Employee

By Nancy Capistran, PCC, CPC

While many instances of betrayal can take place from a higher rung in management towards a lower rung in the employee food chain, sometimes trust can be busted by a new hire.

My client, a senior manager in corporate America, had an open position for a junior-level person with a job description requiring skills beyond those of an entry-level employee. My client received a resume and a strong cover letter from a freshly minted college graduate who didn't have the requisite skills, but who reminded my client of herself when she was just starting out. My client talked with human resources to have this candidate come in for a professional discussion to determine if she had the capacity to function at a junior level if my client had the time to mentor her. Human resources had already identified a number of solid candidates who were turn-key for the position, but my client went out on a limb to hire this young woman and thereby give her not only the opportunity to sharpen her skills, but also the opening to help ease her path forward in her career.

I remember the day that my client called me in a panic. A number of her colleagues had started coming to her to share that the new hire had been trying to sabotage my client's personal brand, making my client look bad while making herself look better. At first, my client was in disbelief, but as the number of people coming to her increased, she felt stabbed in the back. She was crushed. My client had mentioned to me on a number of occasions how she had regularly let the new hire know that her efforts were valued and appreciated, she had provided the new hire with opportunities to advance in her job responsibilities, and the new hire was well compensated. To my client, everything was going extremely well. In reality, the new hire had been intentionally misleading and deceiving my client.

As much as retaliation might have made my client feel better in the short run, our work together enabled her to understand that it would not serve her well in the long run. Instead of having a kneejerk response, my client kept her emotions in check and tried to be open-minded. She took the time to self-reflect and see if there could be a deeper meaning behind the new hire's actions. My client needed time to ruminate on the facts and size up the situation before responding. Quickly, it became clear to my client that the new hire was intentionally defaming and alienating my client from both management and her co-workers due to her excessive ambition.

Backstabbing is a betrayal that leaves scars. Backstabbers are often motivated by delusional beliefs that the only way to get ahead and to stay ahead is to stomp on others. The new hire sought self-promotion rather than embracing and nurturing a trusting, supportive culture. My client was astounded as to how this employee could have betrayed her in such a narcissistic way. I shared with my client the need to anchor her recovery by choosing to take actions that aligned with her personal values as well as the

company's deep-rooted culture and well-established brand. I encouraged her to be true to her inner self, knowing that she would be able to make her best decisions from there. She needed to rise above the dishonesty and the deception that she had been subjected to. By embracing a higher-path response, she showed up as a powerful role model for her team. My client resisted the urge to stoop to the new hire's level. The less than favorable habits of undermining and sabotaging really spoke to the new hire's own insecurities and character flaws. I explained to my client that it was best to confront the shifty behavior as soon as possible because avoidance would only exacerbate the issue. Oftentimes, betrayers fail to fully grasp the negative consequences that their behaviors have on others or on themselves from a credibility and respectability perspective. My client confronted the new hire calmly yet firmly, explaining that she was aware of her unethical actions and that she was very disappointed in her lack of integrity. My client went on to say that she expected a higher caliber of conduct from the new hire, especially after everything that my client had done to support her growth and development. I continued to work with my client to get her to a point where she could rise up again to be the leader that she had been before this humiliating episode had unfolded. I explained to my client that it was important that she be able to move on or it would inevitably spill over into other aspects of her professional as well as her personal life. The new hire continued with her sabotaging ways and was terminated due to her ongoing violation of company policy.

We have all experienced the sting of deceit – we cannot prevent betrayal. Deceptive actions range in magnitude from mild to extreme. The bigger the betrayal, the more considerable the impact and the more challenging it is to come to terms with it. I do not believe that we all need to figure out the reasons for the bad behavior in order for us to process through to a healthier place. People behave without scruples for a variety of reasons, many of which have nothing to do with us. Allowing ourselves to get caught up in the vortex of why they did what they did is not productive. Recovery requires that we let go if we are to move forward towards an improved destiny.



About the Author: Nancy Capistran is a best-selling author, an award-winning, internationally certified executive coach, motivational speaker, and trusted advisor. She is Principal of [Capistran Leadership, LLC](#), and [Crisis Interception, LLC](#). Nancy's best-selling international leadership book: [Open Your Eyes and LEAD](#) shows readers how to become a positive force in the world and how to balance and manage omnipresent tensions while striving for leadership excellence. Capistran shares inspirational stories and advice from her 30+ year career to help both seasoned and emerging leaders develop intentionality while maintaining their core values and beliefs even when life's pressures dictate otherwise.