

[Print](#)

Stop the Gossip, Save Your Career

Heather Boerner, for Yahoo! HotJobs, Yahoo! HotJobs

Getting ahead at work may hinge on resisting the urge to spread the latest news about your coworkers.

"You may think gossip is harmless, but you might just be shooting yourself in the foot as far as your credibility goes," said Rachel Weingarten, author of "Career and Corporate Cool: How to Look, Dress and Act the Part at Every Stage of Your Career." She continues, "Let your work speak for itself. You don't need to be the one making yourself look better by talking down someone else."

Consider the Damage

Sure, gossip can be almost too enticing to keep to ignore -- but consider these consequences:

- **You lose your reputation.** "My reputation is my business," said Weingarten. "If someone says something bad about me, or I become known as a gossip, that could affect my entire career."
- **Coworkers avoid you.** "If people view you as a gossip, they may stop sharing information with you," said April Callis, president of Gossip Stoppers, a program designed to create positive workplaces. "Then instead of being the one with all the power and information, you're out of the loop because no one trusts you."
- **Your work suffers.** The negativity spread by gossip makes people hate their jobs. "They miss work, they get less done while they're there, and they feel unappreciated," says Callis. Suddenly, you're not giving your best, and your boss may notice.

There's a better way to deal with water cooler talk. First, and perhaps most obvious: Keep the information to yourself.

It's one thing to learn the office scoop -- it's another to share it. Even asking someone else at work to verify what you've just heard counts as gossip, said Callis. If it's something criminal, tell your boss. If not, let it drop.

Resist the Urge

Next, teach your coworkers not to gossip with you. Use these techniques:

- **Replace gossip.** Sometimes gossip is the only thing you have in common with coworkers, said Weingarten. So find something to replace it. Do you both knit? Are you both sports fans? If you must gossip, do it about movie stars or soap operas, she said. Just leave the office out of it.
- **Set a timer.** If a coworker or employee comes to you determined to gossip, set a timer for five minutes, and let the person spew. When the time's up, so is the gossip. You don't have to respond, said Callis. You can just listen.
- **Write it down.** When a coworker runs to your desk with the latest juicy gossip, get out a pad and pen. Writing down the facts serves two purposes: It shows the gossip that everything she says is being documented. And it helps you focus on facts instead of feelings.

What you may find is that you and those around you feel happier as they gossip less, says Callis.

"When I walk into a positive workplace, people are engaged and they feel valued," she says. "They stay."

Also on Yahoo! HotJobs:

[When office gossip may be a good thing](#)

[How to talk back to your boss](#)

[Negotiate your ideal benefits](#)

[Find a new job near you](#)

Copyright © 2007 Yahoo! Inc. All rights reserved.