



# VERA CAUSA GROUP

## **Workshopping Case Study #1 – Dealing with Toxic Negativity**

Steve was the leaders of a mid-sized organization. Steve appointed Mary as his Chief Deputy shortly after assuming leadership. Steve and Mary worked hard to improve the office, which had been poorly managed in the previous administration. They instilled a spirit of mission and an attitude of professionalism. At first morale improved, but as time went on, they noticed that many several members of the team were developing a negative attitude. Upon investigation, Steve and Mary realized that one of their very best employees, Gary, was infecting the office with constant negativity about the new administration. Since Gary was a highly respected professional, he was particularly influential with his colleagues and damaged morale by his criticism of Steve, Mary and the office in general.

Steve reached out to VCG and utilized our workshopping service. Both he and Mary were concerned that if they fired Gary, there would be a backlash from the other employees and morale could sink even further. Yet they knew that if they did nothing, the tide of negativity would continue to grow and undermine their goals for the organization.

During the course of a few hour-long workshopping calls, Steve learned how to manage the Gary problem without creating a backlash from his other staff. We gave him strategies and talking points that allowed him to effectively communicate with Gary and help him understand that his negativity was harming the office and could not continue. Ultimately, Gary left of his own accord because he was being held accountable for his behavior and he didn't like that. And, because of the way it was handled, Gary's departure didn't cause so much as a ripple in the organization. Today, morale and performance are both higher than ever.

## **Workshopping Case Study #2 – Special Investigation Report**

An elected prosecutor (we will call him Jeffrey) in the Midwest was appointed by a judge as special prosecutor for a matter in a different jurisdiction. The special prosecutor was tasked with reviewing the findings of a police investigation into a government office in the adjoining county to determine if there was a violation of state criminal law in the management of the office under investigation.

The police investigation began because of allegations that the county office, under the direction of the elected official of that office, allowed county employees or family members to pay tax payments late without assessing late fees for those transactions. The investigation of this county office was considered by many as a political investigation brought forward by a political rival of the elected official and made headlines across the state.

Jeffrey was already a client of VCG, and he brought the matter forward for assistance with the release of his findings to the community. Jeffrey was concerned that his legal findings would create unnecessary political strife and place him squarely in the middle of the chaos.

VCG has extensive experience in writing and releasing special investigative reports to the community. During the course of several workshopping sessions, VCG was able to help Jeffrey brainstorm the results of his legal findings, develop a report that clearly communicated the scope of his work, was easy for the media and the community to understand, and neutralized potential politization of the findings. Basically: Just the facts, ma'am.

VCG provided Jeffrey with a critical review of his report and helped him organize the finding in a clear and concise manner. VCG also uncovered some online media content that Jeffrey was unaware of that was shaping the online narrative about the activities in question. As a result, VCG developed a communications strategy including a press release and talking points for the media and community to ensure that the key points of the findings were not lost in the local drama.

Despite the political nature of the investigation and the media attention surrounding the matter, the release of the report was met without any undue fanfare and attacks against Jeffrey, the police investigation or the legal conclusions.