



## **US versus THEM, Incorporated**

**By: Kelly Graves “The Corporate Therapist™”**

An overwhelming majority of organizations have inadvertently *created* “us versus them” cultures. These organizations have turned much of their focus and resources away from serving the customer and directed it toward in-fighting and power struggles. Businesses I work with often have good products and services, but are on the brink of going out of business or have had a history of losing significant market share and revenue because of such a culture. Oftentimes, these losses are not caused by the poor economy or stiff competition, but are actually self-inflicted and caused because of conflict or what I call the “US versus THEM” culture.

In essence, people who work in the “US Versus THEM” cultures do so out of necessity. Their day is often focused on the internal problems of the organization rather than providing better customer service, product improvement, and increasing revenue. Oddly enough, these people have the best of intentions, but over time, problems get worse and things start to go downhill very fast until staff and management are reduced to finger-pointing, blaming, and incessant gossiping. Do the following statements sound familiar?

- “They have no idea what they are doing and we constantly have to do work over because they didn’t plan well. Why doesn’t management ever ask our opinion?”
- “The last person who gave her honest opinion was picked on by the boss until she was forced to quit.”
- “I wish I could get my employees to follow-through on projects and think for themselves.”
- “We just lost eight more employees. Why do people keep quitting after we spend all that money training them?”
- “Who am I going to promote to manage that department? I don’t have anyone decent to choose from.”
- “My boss doesn’t know how to manage and build people up; all he knows how to do is tear people down and berate them.”
- “They want us to do more work, we have less people then we did three years ago. We simply don’t have enough time.”

When working within organizations, I have never met “They” or “Them.” In fact, there is no “they” or “them;” only “us.” So, if you find yourself in an “Us versus Them” culture, get off the fence of indecision, quit griping, and do something about it. Basically you have three choices:

1. Choose to stay and learn how to make the best of the way things are.

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2. Choose to leave and find a better environment to work in.
3. Choose to help change and improve your organization. In other words, be part of the solution.

If you choose to stay and make the best of it, know that it is a choice you are making and be content with that choice. Accept your situation and look for positive aspects. For instance, today find five things you like about your company, the product, or the people. Yes, this will be hard, but what choice do you have? You decided to stay.

If you choose to move on, do it within three months. Or, choose to improve your skills or education, and then make the job change within 6-12 months. Yes, it may be inconvenient, but you decided to leave, so do something about it.

If you choose to help the organization improve, it doesn't matter what your current position is. Isolate the top 3-5 problems in your department, make a plan and offer solutions. If you don't start the process, who will?

“US” vs. “Them” can become “We are a profitable, winning team and loving it.” The choice is yours.

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