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Media Release

28 June – 1 July 2007:
Adelaide
Convention Centre,
South Australia,
Australia

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Psychology Conference: Key Media Opportunities

Having best friends at work is distracting, yet rude co-workers can be detrimental to employee engagement. Australian businesses are also being warned about white-collar crime, and alcohol and drug use in the workplace.

These are some of the issues being explored at the Australian Psychological Society Industrial and Organisational Psychology (IOP) Conference at the Adelaide Convention Centre from 28 June to 1 July. For more information, please visit: www.iopconference.com.au.

Psychologists are available for interview on the following topics. Please call Elaine Grant on 0412 683 068 to coordinate an interview.

Bad manners detrimental to employee productivity

Rude and undermining co-workers, managers or leaders can negatively impact employee engagement and productivity, a study has confirmed.

The research found one in five employees experience an incident of bad manners at work once a month.

“Rude and undermining colleagues are those who question your judgement, exclude you from situations, interrupt when you are speaking, make derogatory comments, withhold information or belittle your ideas,” said organisational psychologist and study co-author, Dr Barbara Griffin from the University of Western Sydney.

“This behaviour is more subtle and diffuse than outright bullying, which is targeted and occurs more frequently. But, it still has a large impact on employee engagement, including whether you stay in an organisation, speak positively about your job or go that extra mile.”

Australian businesses at risk of white-collar crime, says expert

White-collar crime costs billions of dollars each year and it is imperative Australian businesses know how to prevent it, according to psychologist, David Curnow.

“Understanding the psychological profile of a white-collar offender can help organisations to protect themselves,” said Mr Curnow.

“Many people are surprised that generally they are homeowners, who are well educated, non-substance abusers and married. This makes them different to other offenders in the criminal justice system.”

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Best friends distracting at work, study finds

A study into workplace relationships has found having a close friend at work can be a major distraction.

Respondents cited excessive chatting, having too much fun and an inability to separate work from play as contributing to a lack of focus.

Giving critical feedback, wanting to avoid showing favouritism and issues with confidentiality were among the other difficulties with having a best friend at work, according to the research.

“When faced with a work-related problem many people will prioritise their friendship over their responsibilities to their organisation, which businesses may find concerning,” said psychologist and Auckland University of Technology lecturer, Dr Rachel Morrison.

“Workplace friendships are like a double-edged sword. The benefits of a friendly workplace can be really positive, but organisations should be aware of the potential difficulties and how to manage friendships at work.”

Battling alcohol use in the workplace

Three million working days are lost in Australia each year due to alcohol and drug related issues, according to a leading industry expert.

“Research has shown that absenteeism resulting from hangovers or alcohol and drug related injuries costs Australian businesses more than \$500 million every year¹. This is a very serious problem,” said Donna Bull, CEO of Alcohol and other Drugs Council of Australia.

“Although many people are concerned about illicit drug use in the workplace, alcohol is actually the bigger issue. A third of the Australian workforce regularly drinks at risky levels, and one in every 16 works under the influence of alcohol.²”

“We know that alcohol and drug use poses considerable risks, including loss of productivity and occupational health and safety issues. It goes without saying that more needs to be done to address the problem,” Ms Bull said.

¹ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2006. Alcohol and work: patterns of use, workplace culture and safety.

² Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2006. Alcohol and work: patterns of use, workplace culture and safety.

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