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Creative Group showed nearly a third of executive-level employees said that a colleague had tried to make them look bad in a variety of ways. A study by the Harvard Business...

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A toxic business culture can bring down the whole company, driving good employees away and draining productivity.

Such a negative atmosphere is fairly common in U.S. companies. A survey by The

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“When faced with organizational disarray, it’s sometimes helpful to introduce different team-development concepts,” says **Andi Simon**, a corporate anthropologist and author of *On the Brink: A Fresh Lens to Take Your Business to New Heights* (www.andisimon.com). “Interestingly, the one the CEO or division manager chooses is usually the one that resonates best with him or her.

“Often, though, that’s not the one that rings most true with team members who, more often than not, are a group of great players who just need a better way to collaborate, coordinate and communicate – and not compete.”

Simon provides three ways company leaders can build teams that work well together towards a common goal:

- **Navigate the negatives.** Simon suggests getting the team to play a game called Speed Boat, created by Luke Hohmann. “Speed Boat is based on the concept that something is holding the team back, similar to anchors or rough waters,” Simon says. “To determine what that impediment might be, individuals write down what they think is holding their boat (team) back, then post their reasons on a wall over a picture of a speed boat. It’s fascinating how a metaphor—a boat—and the image of an anchor help people uncover the toxic issues that are damaging their interactions.”
- **Discuss sad, mad, glad.** The purpose is to encourage team members to redesign their interpersonal relationships so that the toxic environment can be relieved, if not resolved. “Participants each have a set amount of time to tell a story about what they are glad about, sad about, and mad about in their daily work,” Simon says. “Then they talk about what they would do to increase, reduce and eliminate in order to create a new story that addresses the sad and mad, and builds on the glad.”
- **Pair up.** There is a growing realization in business today that solo work styles are not as effective as when people work in pairs. “In this approach, pairs of staff

members are responsible to each other to make sure their jobs are done on time

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Andi Simon, Ph.D., author of *On the Brink: A Fresh Lens to Take Your Business to New Heights*, is a corporate anthropologist and award-winning author (www.simonassociates.net). She is the founder and CEO of Simon Associates Management Consultants, designed over a decade ago to help companies use the tools of anthropology to better adapt to changing times. Simon also is a public speaker and an Innovation Games facilitator and trainer. She served as a tenured professor of anthropology and American studies at Ramapo College of New Jersey, and was a visiting professor teaching entrepreneurship at Washington University in St. Louis. Simon has appeared on “Good Morning America” and has been featured in the Washington Post, Business Week and Forbes, and on Bloomberg Radio.

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