



How Much Drama Are You Tolerating in Your Business?

By Betsi Bixby, Meridian Associates

No matter how successful you are, or how awesome your business is, I can guarantee there is still unnecessary drama you continue to tolerate. How do I know this? Because in working with hundreds of high-performing Petro companies, there is not a company without some sort of drama, from as petty as office workers who don't get along to major accident and safety issues.

Now here is a little hard truth – Drama, no matter how benign or severe, is a symptom of dysfunction in your business. It will continue unless you decide it must stop. Yes, you're tolerating things you need to address. The nicer a person you are, the more you tolerate!

Now I'm not suggesting that you not be nice or even kind. What I am suggesting is that you hurt yourself, your team, and sometimes even your customers by tolerating things you need to take on and cure. Most drama is simply a lack of systematic approach. Let's look at common Petro drama and its cures.

Dropped Balls – You know this drama because it's when you think something is getting done, you think you and your team doing everything with excellence, then BOOM... something gets missed. You find out when a customer calls, or an employee gets angry, or God forbid, a banker or supplier calls you. Some CEOs will tell me that a good portion of their day is "putting out fires." Guess what? Those are dropped balls. Something is not working smoothly.

To conquer dropped balls, begin by keeping a list of those balls for one week, 5 business days. Every time you get interrupted for a decision, or any unexpected event takes place, keep it on your list. Most owners find their telephone super handy for this. Even if a drama moment gets revealed while you are driving somewhere, by using your phone list you can voice record the item immediately to your list.

At the end of the week, take a long, hard look at your list, particularly looking for patterns of recurring situations. It could be a certain person needs your attention repeatedly, or a certain process (dispatch, supply, sales, etc.) is causing you heartburn. The tough part is that it's highly likely you have tolerated all this noise for many years. But now, it's time to change that!

By observing the patterns in your list, you can seriously tackle the things that are sucking up your time and causing you stress. If it's a person, decide if they need more training, more authority, or maybe just more confidence. If all of those are in place, you may need clearer boundaries-- what you want to be involved in and what the individual should do without you. You can always be informed later.

It's interesting that most CEOs who tell me about a person constantly asking them for decisions don't realize that team members think that is what is wanted, needed, and required. Often the "offending employee" is shocked to learn the owner did not want to be consulted on 90% of their decisions!

If it's a process rather than a person, look for root causes. I can't tell you how many operations snags get solved by simply working step by step backwards from the drama to get to a solution at the beginning of the process. For instance, in companies with a lot of drama with brand new customers, much can be solved with a new customer data sheet being routed to all the people and departments needing info. Sometimes the new customer data is being collected just fine, but there is a breakdown in communication channels. All it takes to reduce noise is to set clear communication channels.

Personality Conflicts – I can't count how many times owners bemoan employees who don't get along with each other. Whether it's people in the office, drivers, service techs, store personnel, whoever, work is no fun when people don't like and respect each other. Unfortunately, high school and even college coursework rarely includes practical training on personalities and communication styles, so when faced with someone different, people often implode.

Now you as a smart business owner are likely developing a healthy, high-performance workplace including personality diversity, and as a strategic leader, purposely hiring diverse people. You also know it's your responsibility to train them how to get along with opposite personalities. But what if you never had this training yourself? And worse, what if you are conflict-averse? Then you will proverbially have the "inmates running the asylum" and be tolerating daily unnecessary drama.

Because this is often the situation, we at Meridian now include this leadership training for our clients and teams through Meridian Events and our M-Power programs. I am continually amazed at the forward progress of the teams who gain appreciation of differences and then use them to their strategic advantage. As they do this, the conflict drama completely dissipates over time. There is alignment and much smoother working relationships that pay off with profitable results.

Self-Induced Drama – OK this is the tough one so put on your seat belt! Who in your organization can do your job competently? Yes, your job! Too many times when I am working with owners and senior leaders, the answer is "there really isn't anybody." When there is no depth of leadership, the result is stress, unnecessary drama, and in the worst cases even chaos when the leader is not accessible for critical decisions. This is not how you want to run your company or your life!

To conquer this drama, the first step to take is make a list of the things only you do, that no one else has mastered yet. Be brutally honest. Often, I see things like financing, critical negotiations, strategic vision, and acquisitions. Once you've developed your list, decide exactly how critical each item is to your company's historical and future success using a 1-5 rating scale, where 5 equals critical. I hope there aren't too many 5's on that list because if there are, you are creating

enormous risk for your team including the families your company supports through their paychecks.

At The Family Business Intensive this year, we're guiding key business leaders in how to reduce drama in their workspaces to achieve even more in the future. Not only will we be stopping drama, we will be pushing your leaders toward better team alignment, higher efficiency, and more profit for your business! It's time for you to break the cycle and help your leaders do it differently and do it better. I invite you to visit [AskMeridian.com/TFBI-2023](https://www.AskMeridian.com/TFBI-2023) to register for this high ROI event.

Whether you and your leaders join us or not, at least tackle your own critical list. Decide who you want to mentor and develop. Encourage all your key leaders to have their "trainee" for their own positions. Lead by example in mentoring, training, and coaching.

And right now, stop tolerating drama. Identify it. Address it. Cure it. Your team, your customers, and you deserve smooth and drama-free business and life.

Meridian Associates has been partnering with family-owned Petro marketers for over 30 years to remove barriers, accelerate business growth and reduce stress levels. We've equipped over 4,000 leaders to grow their business and help their families thrive through our combination of high impact business coaching, Petro focused leadership events, advisory, and precision company valuations. Meridian helps Petro leaders build their legacy. Discover how Meridian can help your business thrive by visiting www.askmeridian.com or calling us at 817-594-0546.