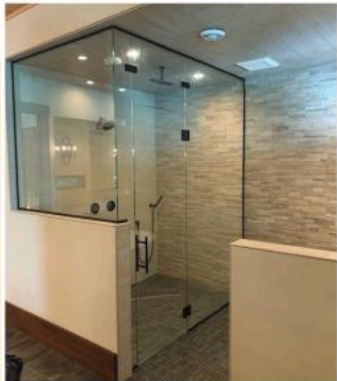
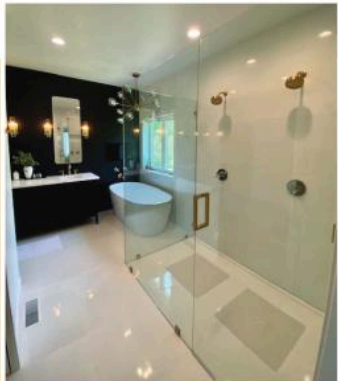


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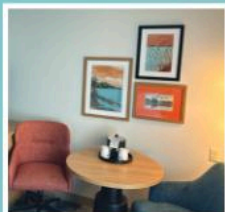
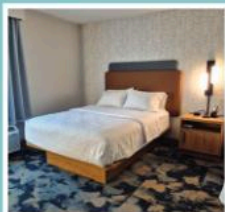
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WAKE UP *call*

BY ANGELA RANTASHA OF ALEXANDRIA

I interview a lot of people, and almost every time I ask why they're leaving their current job, there's one recurring theme: "It's so toxic."

Different industries. Different roles. Different personalities. Same word.

Toxic.

And I get it, because I've worked in toxic workplaces, too. They were hard. Draining. Some days felt impossible. They all shared one powerful truth: they could be changed... and that didn't have to come from the top. It didn't have to come from a new boss, a new policy, or a corporate overhaul.

That change had to come from me.

A positive workplace comes from you... through repeated positive interactions, such as choosing collaboration and respect over competition and resentment. It doesn't happen overnight, but rather moment by moment. One conversation. One choice. One response at a time.

When I changed *how* I showed up, *how* I spoke to coworkers, *how* I handled stress, and *how* I responded, being proactive rather than reactive, the energy around me started to shift... and that's when I realized something that has stayed with me ever since:

A positive work culture doesn't magically appear. It's built, one person at a time.

And you know what? Leadership took notice.

Not immediately... but they noticed.

What started as small changes in how we treated each other gradually progressed into a more constructive work environment. Strong teams began forming from the bottom up, not the top down. Relationships deepened. People felt safer speaking up. Mentorship became intentional, not accidental.



Soon, our shifts started differently. There was more positivity. More encouragement. More “we’ve got this” energy – instead of silent dread. Team building wasn’t forced. It happened naturally, because people actually wanted to be there for one another.

And that adjustment in attitude changed everything.

Workloads started to feel lighter, not because there was less work, but because it was shared. Divided and conquered together instead of carried alone. Instead of competing, we collaborated. Instead of pointing fingers, we problem-solved. Instead of burning out, we built each other up.

That experience revealed something I’ll never forget:

Real culture change doesn’t always start in a boardroom. Sometimes it starts with a group of people simply deciding to do better for each other.

If your workplace is toxic, don’t look to your leaders for solutions or try to find a new job. Look within yourself.

You can be the change.

You don’t need a title to create a positive workplace.

You don’t need permission to lead with kindness.

Sometimes the most powerful leadership doesn’t come from the top at all. It rises quietly from within the team, one person at a time. *DW*

Angela Rantasha is the owner of Sota Cleaning Co. in downtown Alexandria. When she’s not with her team, you can find her on the patio drinking wine with her friends, paddling boarding Lake Davina, or camping at one of Minnesota’s beautiful state parks.

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