Clear and present danger: Mumsnet user reveals perils of office birthday brutality

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A MUMSNET user has lifted the lid on office birthday etiquette by revealing how theirs was the ONLY anniversary ignored by colleagues.

Banal best wishes scrawled in biro on a non descript supermarket card and a small whip-round are familiar traditions in most British workplaces to mark another year passing.

But when the informal understanding of how such occasions are marked goes wrong, the results can be truly upsetting.

The depth of ill-feeling has been revealed by a Mumsnet user who goes by the name ‘TheStarling’ on the popular online forum.

Asking for advice, they wrote: “In the place where I work (very small office only a few people), last June we started recognising each other’s birthdays by doing a card and everyone signing it, we also put a couple of pounds in to buy the co worker whose birthday it is a little gift.

“I've put in to all colleagues’ collections and signed the card since we started.”

They went on to explain that their own birthday was ‘completely ignored’ despite being written on the office calendar yet colleagues even enquired as to how the celebrations went.

The aggrieved Mumsnetter added: “I wasn't too upset because I thought maybe we were not doing it anymore and did not even mention it.

“Today, I went out shopping and asked if anyone wanted anything. A colleague asked me to buy a birthday card for a colleague whose birthday it is at the end of April and to start up a collection.

“I went to the supermarket, duly bought the card. However I do now feel extremely hurt (I don't want to come across as some sort of spoilt child).

“I'm liked in the office, get on well with everyone. Baring (sic) in mind mine only birthday overlooked by colleagues, what shall I do because, actually, I feel quite hurt by it all.

“Shall I just not bother to put in to future collections and sign cards?”

The responses were unanimously in favour of being honest when the situation was next mentioned.

One commentator said: “I wouldn't sign any cards, be buying any cards / presents or giving money for the whole year.

“When they ask why ‘oh, no one bothered for my birthday so didn't think we was (sic) doing that anymore’ and just look at them.”

Another advised: “They have been very blatant about leaving you out of this 'group' so don't play their game.

“When they come asking you for money just say ‘No thanks, I'll pass’. If anyone dares comment on it or give you any attitude then be blunt about it.”

Bespoke present expert Kate Roberts from online specialist thegiftco.co.uk said: “This incident, heartbreaking laid bare on Mumsnet, shows how tricky birthday can be in the modern working environment.

“While a well thought out present and suitable card is a lovely thing to do for a colleague, if someone is forgotten about or, even worse, ignored, they can be left feeling bitter towards their workmates.

“Although it may not be seen as vital to the business as the actual work carried out, I’d suggest that

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companies be extremely wary of how the whole birthday situation is handled.

“That way they can ensure they don’t have a section of their workforce feeling demotivated or undervalued.”

- ENDS -

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