

Japan firms wage war on 'smell harassment'

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Got stinky colleagues? Japan has a seminar for that.

After a long, sweaty summer, some firms in a nation renowned for its cleanliness are declaring all out war on an office plague known as "smell harassment".

Telling a colleague they stink is touchy stuff, of course.

But personal care product maker Mandom says it has the answer for firms worried about hurting someone's feelings: "smell care" seminars.

Japanese media have picked up the scent on this anti-odour battle, reporting that about 40 employees from mobile giant SoftBank recently attended a session on what causes [body odour](#) and how to avoid it.

Smell harassment joins a long list of other office complaints including "alcohol harassment" (forcing a colleague to drink) and karaoke harassment (forcing someone to sing against their will).

In response to the national crisis, eyewear chain Owndays has reportedly created a list of odour regulations for staff amid concerns that poor hygiene could hit sales.

The culprits include sweaty, chain-smoking salarymen, a colleague doused in perfume, and that guy who ate too much breath-destroying garlic at lunch.

Mandom insists the seminars can gently teach offenders to change their ways, and create a more tolerant office.

"Better understanding the mechanism behind and nature of those smells should lead to increased tolerance," said Mandom's Miyuu Sato, optimistically.

Intensive research found a whopping 90 percent of Japanese men emit odours noticeable to others nearby, Sato said.

But the anti-odour firm is also clear on where to draw the line: bullying smelly colleagues into a shower is not the answer.

"Bodily smells are not always a bad thing and they don't always bother people," Sato said.

"Odours are a person's unique characteristic."

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