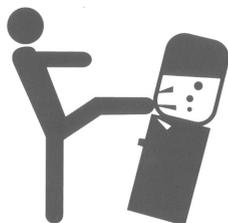


I HATE PEOPLE!



*Kick Loose from the Overbearing and
Underhanded Jerks at Work and
Get What You Want Out of Your Job*

**JONATHAN LITTMAN
MARC HERSHON**



Little, Brown and Company

New York Boston London

Copyright © 2009 by Jonathan Littman and Marc Hershon

All rights reserved. Except as permitted under the U.S. Copyright Act of 1976, no part of this publication may be reproduced, distributed, or transmitted in any form or by any means, or stored in a database or retrieval system, without the prior written permission of the publisher.

Little, Brown and Company
Hachette Book Group
237 Park Avenue, New York, NY 10017
Visit our Web site at www.HachetteBookGroup.com

First Edition: June 2009

Little, Brown and Company is a division of Hachette Book Group, Inc. The Little, Brown name and logo are trademarks of Hachette Book Group, Inc.

Illustrations by Bill Murray

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Littman, Jonathan.

I hate people! : kick loose from the overbearing and underhanded jerks at work and get what you want out of your job / Jonathan Littman, Marc Hershon. – 1st ed.

p. cm.

ISBN 978-0-316-03229-2

1. Quality of work life. 2. Interpersonal conflict. 3. Interpersonal relations. I. Hershon, Marc. II. Title.

HD6955.H39 2009

650.1'3 – dc22

2008051575

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

RRD-IN

Book design by Meryl Sussman Levavi

Printed in the United States of America

For Debra
– M.H.

For Elizabeth, Kate, and Sherry
– J.L.

Contents

1. I Hate People 3

ONE

THE TEN LEAST WANTED

2. Stumbling Blocks 21
3. Wrong Turns 35
4. Time Wasters 49

TWO

FLYING SOLO

5. The Soloist 65
6. Solocrafting 105

THREE

OFFICE LIFE

7. Running Interference 147
8. Off My Plate 167
9. The Disrupters 181
10. Fool the Rules 189

FOUR

SPACES AND PLACES

11. Dig My Cave 201
 12. Island Hopping 231
- Time to Go Solo 259
- Acknowledgments 262



1. *I Hate People*

I hate people.

Where'd we get that idea? We listened. We heard people muttering "I hate people" whenever things would get stressful. Like, every single day. This is not a new problem, and the evidence suggests it's getting worse by the second, thanks to remarkable advances in technology that have had the unintended effect of making it far easier for people to annoy us. The billions of e-mails, v-mails, and text messages sent every day threaten to overwhelm us like a plague of e-locusts.

We hate people who play favorites, people who make the rules, people who don't give others a break. You know who we're talking about. The people who lie in the shadows of your meeting, and after you've just made an awesome presentation, stab you with, "Excuse me, but have our customers asked for this?"

I Hate People!

Part of the problem stems from a lack of trust. More than seven out of ten Americans distrust the CEOs of large corporations. Only a third of employees believe that “senior management communicates openly and honestly,” according to a recent survey by Towers Perrin of ninety thousand workers in eighteen countries; two-thirds believe their bosses can’t or won’t talk straight. Survey after survey has shown that half of the workforce does not trust its superiors. Recent McKinsey research has revealed that fundamental values of honesty and candor are missing in a growing percentage of companies.

The numbers suggest a crisis – one not likely to be solved by organizations or corporations anytime soon. Consider that the federal government’s Bureau of Labor Statistics does not even track worker satisfaction.

People are what bring us down, make us scream obscenities in our cars, mutter things under our breath in our cubicles, and shout in the elevator when we’re alone.

The Perfect Holiday

.....
What were one-third of fifteen hundred British workers willing to do?
Forgo a week’s holiday if they didn’t have to work next to people they hated.

Denial has been widespread, but we don’t believe it’s possible to keep a lid on the truth. People are angry – and today, they’re a lot less likely to keep quiet about it.

On Facebook, the popular online social network, users

have generated an “Enemybook” option, where People Haters can air their feuds. In mid-2008, the *New York Times* ran a front-page story about another kind of broken relationship getting headlines. An astonishing number of ex-spouses are furiously trashing their former beloveds on popular blogs on the Internet. The courts are doing little to stem the vilifying, and as the *Times* reported, “The confessions can stretch toward eternity in a steady stream of enraged or despondent postings.”

The constraints of the workplace and fear of lawsuits have bottled up similar fury against irritating cubemates and meddling bosses. But despite these roadblocks, we had no trouble finding dozens of blogs and websites that play to our basic frustration at the office – sites with names like Anger Central, Disgruntled Workforce, and Team Building Is for Suckers.

These feelings are not a joke. Consider what a former lieutenant commander in the navy told us of his experience working on Wall Street as an investment banker: “I was an unmitigated failure. I had no idea how to navigate through these difficult people. One Sunday after Thanksgiving of 2004, I was homicidal. I was going to kill my boss. I was fighting to swim and he had his arms around my neck, strangling me.” What makes this story even more striking is that the lieutenant commander prided himself on being a solid leader of 120 men in the military, dedicating himself to his missions in Kosovo, Guam, and Estonia.

Burnout is the common affliction of driven, obsessive professionals. “In 21st-century New York, the 60-hour week is considered normal,” writes *New York* magazine. “In some professions, it’s a status symbol. But burnout, for the most

part, is considered a sign of weakness, a career killer.” Workers don’t burn out just because they work too hard. Workers burn out because of *people*. A classic 1990s management study showed that workers who have frequent intense or emotionally charged interactions with other people are more susceptible to what’s referred to as emotional exhaustion.

The past few years many Americans have discovered that a lack of accountability got our country, economy, and institutions into a whole lot of trouble. Regulators were too nice to hedge funds and speculators and Wall Street. Bernie Madoff allegedly ripped off individuals and companies to the tune of \$50 billion – by pretending to be nice. This isn’t the first time this has happened in American business. The Crash of ’29 was another case where people weren’t willing to ask the tough questions. While the first years of the new millennium were defined by this fixation on superficial niceness, we believe we’re entering a new era. Practical People Hating directed toward those demanding our enmity – bankers, Fed chairmen, politicians, and other miscreants who have mucked up our 401ks and fractured our financial infrastructure. A democratic society, built on free trade, has no room for those willing to rig the game and harm millions of people. There are serious consequences for not People Hating enough. Our nation has discovered, in the past decade, how a minority of bad apples can rot not just the rest of the fruit but the barrel as well. The time has come to face reality.

Studies and countless real-life stories clearly demonstrate that people are hating people. Yes, at your very own office. We work too many hours, meet too often, travel too much, and e-mail constantly. Burnout or cowering in your cubicle or office are not viable options.

The Rude Game

.....

89 percent of people say rudeness is a serious problem.

78 percent say it's gotten worse in the past ten years.

99 percent of people say they aren't rude.

— *U.S. News & World Report*

For those readers wondering whether we're serious, a brief note of explanation. We like and sometimes even love individuals. It's people we hate. Many of you may genuinely enjoy the company of your office mates. There's a reason for that. These are people who fall within the standards and expectations you set for your daily interactions. The men and women whose natural shortcomings are offset by their capabilities and character. The problem with most people is that they rarely bother to belly up to this relationship point. They just stand in your way, annoy, and irritate. At times, facing them can be more than we can stand. As comedian Rich Hall said in Seattle back in the 1980s when he was found hiding in the kitchen of the Comedy Underground after his show one night, "I like people. Just not in a group."

This book is designed for businesspeople who recognize the difference between genuine individuals and people. Men and women who know they can't wait for some promised corporate utopia. Being nice when everyone else is just *playing* nice is not wise. Nor is it good for your career. Now that you've gotten this far, we should let you know what you're getting into. You're about to undertake a Discipline. Like

karate or judo. Think of it as jujitsu for outsmarting the corporate oafs.

Who are these oafs? We call them the Ten Least Wanted. Many other books have focused on the positive people in business. Happy people. Creative people. Productive people. The Ten Least Wanted are just the opposite. They are the Stop Signs, the naysayers who block your every idea. The Switchblades, those underhanded jerks who take credit for your work. That Flimflam down the hall with a snarky tendency to trick you into doing his work for him. Then there's Minute Man, who steals your time in bite-size chunks that eat up your day. This is just a glimpse of a few of the men and women who keep us from doing our work and realizing our dreams. We'll be meeting them and the rest of the Ten Least Wanted in depth in the chapters to come, learning skills and strategies for defeating them.

It's time to take action. In your hands you hold the key to keeping people out of your face.

Everyone hates people at some point. And if you say you don't, you're lying.

Don't worry: it's not a bad thing. The contributions of People Haters are increasingly respected and even sought out. Brad Bird, the director of *The Incredibles* and *Ratatouille*, two of Pixar's crop of amazing computer-generated films, chooses to work with computer artists who are People Haters: employees who have become frustrated because their individual approaches to the medium are not valued by the industry at large. Bird called them "black sheep" in an interview in the *McKinsey Quarterly*. When he was tackling the animation job on *The Incredibles*, he sought out these malcontents, believing they held the keys to novel

ways of working faster, more creatively, even less expensively. “We gave the black sheep a chance to prove their theories,” said Bird, “and we changed the way a number of things are done here.”

“I hate mankind, for I think of myself as one of the best of them, and I know how bad I am.”

— SAMUEL JOHNSON

We believe that all of us can get smarter about dealing with people at work. Companies think nothing of devoting major resources to a competitive market analysis for a new product introduction. They assume competitors will try to knock off their innovation. Undercut their pricing. Steal their design. That’s business. Well, the evidence is in and it’s clear these same forces apply on a human level. Coworkers, partners, and bosses – they don’t always have your best interests at heart.

Just as you don’t assume competitors love you, it’s naive to think everyone you work with thinks you’re terrific. The only person you can trust to have your back in this crazy business world is yourself. But today, who has the time or, more important, guts to be themselves? If you’re constantly e-mailing, texting, and calling, chances are you’ve developed a pile of masks and personae to deal with others.

These electronic facades are not your best selves. You might even hate them a bit. Once you face that truth, you can begin to be your true self. And let’s face it, there are a lot of people in your company that your true self would rather not call, e-mail, or text.

I Hate People!

Yes, we understand that our path isn't the politically correct approach to resolving business conflict. We know those books and articles by well-meaning authors: *How to Be Your Coworker's Best Buddy*. *Seven Steps to Becoming the Office Pushover*. *Happy Work: A Practical Guide*. *It's Me, Not You*. *How to Stop Making Your Boss a Bully*. *You're the Reason Your Office Is Miserable*. *Help Me Stop Hurting You*. *I'm a Hungry Little Mouse*.

These works share a common thread: You're to blame. Nobody else. It all goes back to your childhood, your education, your home life. You.

That boss driving you nuts? You just don't understand him. That coworker stealing credit for your great ideas? You should have spoken up sooner.

What's missing here? Honesty.

We know what you're saying: "I don't hate people. I like people."

Of course you do. That's how you were brought up. That's the "right" attitude. You open doors for old ladies. Let strangers cut in line. Don't mind when people butt in on your conversations. Of course you don't hate people.

Here's your chance to prove it. Take the following test and see just how much people make your day.

The *I Hate People!* Quiz

A. When I'm on a business flight I most enjoy sitting beside . . .

1. chatty, large people wearing lots of cologne.
2. crying children.
3. children.
4. an empty seat.
5. two empty seats.

B. During a company meeting I most enjoy . . .

1. watching a long, dry PowerPoint presentation.
2. people repeating themselves. Again.
3. people texting constantly.
4. frequent breaks.
5. leaving.

C. I love it when my coworker . . .

1. watches YouTube videos on his PC.
2. eats stinky food at his desk.
3. clips his nails.
4. calls in sick.
5. quits.

D. I like my boss most when he . . .

1. e-mails me every half hour.
2. peers over my shoulder.
3. jokes about firing me.
4. is delayed flying home.
5. is on vacation.

E. My favorite office noise is somebody . . .

1. clearing his throat.
2. slurping his coffee.
3. tapping his pencil.
4. squeaking his desk chair.
5. snapping his gum.

F. I love overhearing workplace conversation about . . .

1. the boyfriend.
2. the girlfriend.
3. the spouse.
4. the kids.
5. how much someone hates his job.

G. The office food I like most is . . .

1. vending-machine sandwiches.
2. onion bagels.
3. cardboard pizza.
4. Tupperware Surprise.
5. hand-fouled candy from an open dish.

Congratulations! You've just completed a psychological self-exploration that will grant you fresh insights into your level of People Hating. Total up your score and check it against the following scale.

1-7 You really *do* like people. Consider seeking professional help.

8-13 There's hope: you're not a total glutton for punishment.

14-21 Clearly, you're on the path to realizing people aren't all they're cracked up to be.

22-29 You are a People Hater. Though you've got natural talent, you could use some additional skills.

30-35 Devout People Hater. Welcome, friend! Get ready to turn your natural skills into business assets.

THE PATH OF THE SOLOIST

We admire those of you independent and strong enough to rise above your cubicles and dare to be productive People Haters. You deserve a term of your own. We offer the Soloist. Bold enough to create the attitude, space, and time to stretch your career and expand your life. Ready to take that critical step toward becoming one of those happy souls who deftly works alone or collaborates with just a handful of other talented people . . . while artfully deflecting all the

rest. Because while you can't change the people you hate, you *can* stop them from dragging you down.

You'll discover that you're learning a counterintuitive approach to coping with problem people. We're bringing the power of redirecting and avoiding the emotional blows dished out by bosses, coworkers, and competitors. While you may need a lot of these people to get through your day, your career, and your life . . . nobody said you have to like them.

The first step along the Path of the Soloist is to be able to identify the Ten Least Wanted. These are the people in the office who pose the greatest threat to your ability to get your work done. They're coworkers, managers, bosses, and clients. We've classified these ten archetypes under three categories: Stumbling Blocks, Wrong Turns, and Time Wasters. In the first part of the book, you'll learn to identify and defuse the power of the Ten Least Wanted to screw up your day.

I Hate People! will help you learn:

- ▶ **How to** form Ensembles with other Soloists – the best kind of teamwork.
- ▶ **How to** Solocraft, a way of working that increases your effectiveness and productivity, both alone and in a group.
- ▶ **How to** skip or cut short unnecessary meetings, conference calls, and other forms of corporate drudgery to increase your solo time.
- ▶ **How to** minimize and even eliminate progress-stifling interruptions throughout your day.
- ▶ **How to** push things off your plate to help you stay on track while juggling multiple projects.

I Hate People!

- ▶ **How to** dig your Cave, creating the ideal space in which to get away and get your work done.
- ▶ **How to** Island Hop, creating the little refreshing breaks in your workday that give you a chance to relax while leading you to creative breakthroughs.

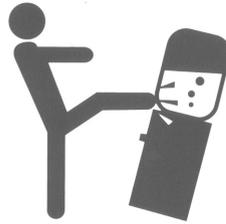
Ready to get started?

Go ahead.

Say it:

I hate people!

ONE



THE TEN LEAST WANTED



“Hell is — other people.”

— JEAN-PAUL SARTRE

We’ve been taught since we were kids that there are positive role models in our lives, and that by focusing on how they live their lives and what they teach us, we’ll be better people.

But no one’s really taught us what to do about the people who trip us up, siphon off our time, or send us off in the wrong direction. There’s the guy assigned to your team who seems to know it all, but is actually a Know-It-None. There’s Minute Man, who says he only needs a minute, then sucks up fifteen. And there’s the coworker you’re expecting to green-light your project who turns out to be a Stop Sign.

Welcome to the Ten Least Wanted, the main adversaries of the Soloist. Our better self. The person with the dual

talent of working effectively with small groups as well as flying solo. Our goal is to show you the way to sharpen your skills as a People Hater. By doing so, you will become a better Soloist.

That's what it's all about. Productive hating.

The heart of our book is an exploration of the Soloist and the way he works best: Solocrafting. But before you can possibly hope to become a Soloist, first you have to face the reality of modern business. That's where the Ten Least Wanted comes in.

To succeed as a Soloist, you must first learn to vanquish your enemies.

It is said that if you know your enemies and know yourself, you will not be imperiled in a hundred battles.

— SUN TZU, *THE ART OF WAR*

People disappoint. Daily. Hourly. Why not wise up and get ready for it? The sooner you learn to stop getting sucker-punched and letting yourself get pissed off, the sooner you can get back to doing your own thing, your own way. So to help you identify these clowns and clods in the corporate sphere – and get on with your work – we've removed the guesswork. We've selected and analyzed the ten most troublesome people you'll encounter in the workplace.

The Ten Least Wanted are not created equal. Depending on your career and profession, some will be more endemic to your business. Every company is unique. As you meet the Ten Least Wanted on the following pages, you may find some personality types more familiar than others. One thing we can guarantee: virtually no company will ever be free of some of these people.

Some of these characters, in small doses and correctly aligned with your project goals, can aid instead of hold you back. The same guy who may one day hold up your budget – the Spreadsheet – may another day help you get the funding your project needs. The same loud, abrasive boss who regularly tests your resilience (a Bulldozer, perhaps) may also have the fortitude to keep your company sailing through hard times. And as perfect and smart as we all are, here's another truth we all know, whether we admit it publicly or not: even during your best week, you may find yourself playing a few of these Least Wanted roles yourself.

For the benefit of those who care about the inner workings of Stumbling Blocks and the rest of the Ten Least Wanted, we asked David Johnson, a British psychologist and the CEO of Venture to Think, to give us his “Psych Shot,” a quick, one-line psychological profile. You'll find it right up top for each of our Ten Least Wanted.

Get to know these archetypes. Develop strategies to deflect and deal with them. You'll increase the time and space you need to Solocraft and become the Soloist of your dreams.