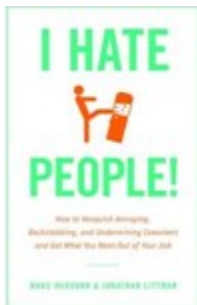




## 10 Least Wanted Co-Workers By Jonathan Littman and Marc Hershon, co-authors of "I Hate People!"



You might be searching for a job -- or just trying to hold on to one for dear life. Times are rough, and not everyone's on their best behavior. But whether you're seeking employment or firmly ensconced in a solid position, one of your biggest challenges is navigating people at the office. People who stick their noses in your cube or trick you into doing their work; people who just have to tell you about some lame blog -- again.

In our book, "I Hate People! Kick Loose from the Overbearing and Underhanded Jerks at Work and Get What You Want Out of Your Job," we call these people the "10 Least Wanted." Some drive you to distraction like water torture. Others may be fatal to your career.

Learn to identify them at a glance or a few words. Counter their productivity-sapping powers with our ready strategies.

### 1. Stop sign

People who always shoot down your ideas are not your friends. Devil's Advocate is another term for these naysayers. The larger your company, the more likely you'll run into Stop Signs who try to strangle your innovative ideas like weeds. Counter their negativity with invitations to do a "build." Respond with: "How might we make this work?" Or, "What changes might make this practical?" For those looking for a job, if your questions get quickly swatted down by your job interviewer, expect that job to be shackled by Stop Signs.

## 2. FlimFlam

FlimFlams have a gift for catching you off-guard and conning you into doing a favor that ends up being a time suck: taking on the client from hell or signing up for the business trip to Cleveland. The best defense is to request details: a page on the project in writing. When they balk, you balk. What's a good clue that the company you're interviewing with views you as a mark to be targeted? Pronouncements such as, "Employees here are very dedicated. This is a 24/7 company ..."

## 3. Bulldozer

They're bullhorns in meetings and are about as easy to stop as a freight train. The worst bulldozers are bullies. If they're co-workers and can't be avoided, you're going to need some muscle. "Unreasonable," is a good word for calmly responding to their assaults. Hold your ground with, "I won't be pushed around." Upon receiving a bullying e-mail, blind carbon-copy (BCC) the evidence to your boss or co-workers. If the Bulldozer is your boss, consider a new job -- or the fight of your life.

## 4. Smiley face

If the eyebrows and eyelids don't -- move, it's a phony smile. Odds are they've got something dastardly up their sleeve or are hiring you for a hellish job. Never smile back at a Smiley Face, especially in a job interview. Counter instead with a serious but thoughtful expression. If the Smiley Face happens to be a co-worker, ask what he's smiling about. That usually deflates the phony grin.

## 5. Liar liar

Technology has made it easy for workers to lie about not getting that e-mail or voice mail, leaving you holding the bag and covering up their errors. Again, a paper trail is a strong defense. You may also want to try the soft approach of a little truth encouragement to pierce the veil of deception: "George, help me make sense of these numbers." During a job interview, subtle questions can reveal whether you are about to enter a Liar Liar culture. "How has the company done financially the past few quarters?"

## 6. Switchblade

People who talk out of school are dangerous. Today they may be trashing your cubemate. Tomorrow they're dishing on you -- to the boss. The work place is a jungle. Be wary of those who may view you as a steppingstone to big game.

### 7. Minute man

They just want a minute of your time. And then another minute. Turn your back as often as possible on Minute Man. Look busy -- even if you aren't. If you can't close a door, hang a partial curtain at your cube entrance to ward off intruders or wear headphones. You'll know the Minute Men when you see them, that idle expression as they hang around trying to find any excuse not to work.

### 8. Know-It-None

Thanks to the Internet, Wikipedia and Google, you're likely surrounded by Know-It-Nones. "What's your source on that?" is often a good defense. Or a distracted, "That's interesting." A few well-researched questions about the history of the company during a job interview may often reveal you're about to enter a culture of Know-It-Nones. If they don't know the first thing about their own company, what does that say about their competence?

### 9. Spreadsheet

Find yourself filling out form after form during interview after interview? Beware. You may soon be surrounded by Spreadsheets. They hand you thick binders on company policies. The rules: everything you can't do. Now, every company needs its share of Spreadsheets to keep projects on track and dole out the resources, but some companies may squeeze so tight you can't breathe.

### 10. Sheeple

Sheeple love meetings. They only perform "approved work tasks," and are happiest when hiding in the herd. If your job interviews are conducted by more than one person, that's a sign you're about to be branded -- and sheared. Unless you want to sleep away the rest of your career, run from Sheeple as fast as possible.

Jonathan Littman and Marc Hershon are the co-authors of "I Hate People!" the new business book with attitude from Little, Brown & Co.

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