

**Dr Rakesh Chopra**

**How to get  
the best out  
of difficult  
people?**



Dr Rakesh Chopra

# How to get the best out of difficult people?

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# Preface

While mentoring ambitious leaders as a Visionary Strategist, I have seen over and over that what gets in the way of the leaders achieving what they set out to in their businesses, is the people they're dealing with.

Imagine if everyone you had to communicate with at work or in business was a robot that had been programmed to always think logically and rationally. It would respond predictably and would be fully clear about its responsibilities. When approached with a request or question, it would calculate all the possible responses and give the answer that is in the best interests of all concerned. Its programming would allow some flexibility, rather than being of the rigid 'computer says no' type. Wouldn't life be easy?

The reality of course is that we don't deal with robots but with human beings, people with emotions and with their own agendas. People who don't respond predictably, even varying from one day to the next. People who don't always have the best interests of everyone concerned at heart. People who are stressed and overwhelmed and not thinking clearly. People who are scared of making a mistake and getting the blame for it.

In business knowing how to get the best out of these types of difficult people successfully, both inside and outside your organisation, means you'll reach productive decisions faster and accelerate the implementation of your strategies. You need to be able to use the right tools and tactics to shift those challenging groups of people from being obstacles to your progress to being fully cooperative with you. If you don't, what I have seen time

and time again in my work with clients is that you'll experience delays and frustration in accomplishing your goals.

Each of these individual delays, multiplied across an organisation, costs money, both in cost overruns and in loss of potential revenue. Behind every project delay are a whole series of small interactions where the opportunity of persuading someone to collaborate more quickly was lost through not knowing how to handle them successfully.

Based on my experience over the last 40 plus years of working with people, I have put together in this book a list of the most common twelve types of difficult people, "How to get the best out of difficult people?" These are the twelve types of difficult people you're most likely to come across in business and life as well who can obstruct your progress.

Not only have I listed out the twelve categories so you can identify them, I am also including strategies and tactics for how to handle them successfully. As I see it, yours and my role is not necessarily to develop these types of people to change their ways for the long term, although that can be done.

What we want for you is for you to know how to deal with these twelve types of difficult people right now so they cooperate with you and you learn how to get the best out of these road blocks in your life.

**Dr Rakesh Chopra**  
Visionary Strategist

# Broad Understanding



"I don't like to be difficult, but  
it's the only thing I'm really good at!"

## **'How to get the best out of difficult people'**

Difficult people in the workplace come in many different guises. What they have in common is that they get in your way, either unintentionally or deliberately. They obstruct you from achieving your corporate and personal goals. Let's introduce to twelve different types of people that you'll probably across in your career. They're:

### **1: The Pedantic Rule Follower**

They insist on following the rules to the letter, even if it is explained to them that the situation is urgent and speed is essential. They are more concerned that they have done everything correctly, even if it means that the goal is missed. They are rigid and have no situational flexibility.

### **2: The Showman**

They are often hugely entertaining and highly popular, so may seem an unlikely obstacle. The problem is, they talk too much. At meetings they want their voice to be heard and to be the star of the show. Even if they do not have anything productive to add, they will have a lot to say about any topic. Any meeting they are in becomes a long performance, wasting your time.

### **3: The Worker's Champion**

They have an 'Us, The Poorly Paid Workers vs 'You, The Rich Fat Cat Management' attitude. When you ask them to implement a strategy, they assess it against their benchmark of whether it benefits the workers. They may challenge you directly on this point or may quietly sabotage and delay changes that they do not approve of.

#### **4: The Information Junkie**

For this type of person, information is power, and they can never get enough of it. They will not make a decision until they have all the information, and having ALL the information is a never-ending excuse to not proceed. They would not accept that they are slow at making decisions, it is just that it is vital to them to just get one more piece of evidence, and then another, and so on.

#### **5: The Report Commissioner**

This type is not indecisive, but is playing a power game. They deliberately suggest preparing yet another report on a project because they want to delay it from proceeding without it looking as if they are the one holding it up. They can maintain their innocent stance while achieving their obstructive objective.

#### **6: The Negative Nancy**

When presented with any idea, they say 'That's not possible because .....' or 'That won't work because .....' and then stop. If a proposal has ten positive aspects and one negative one, they focus only on the negative one. They will use the best of their delay tactics just to avoid working. They are afraid that if something goes wrong then everybody will blame them only.

#### **7: The Bystander**

This type of person is happy to stand on the sidelines and watch the action, but if you approach them to help they are quick to reply 'That's not my job'. They won't take responsibility for anything outside of their (very narrow) remit.

### **8: The 'I'm Too Busy'**

When asked for their input, they say 'I haven't got time to do that' or 'The team's too busy'. They seem overwhelmed and incapable of thinking rationally, and are affronted that you should want to pile yet more on their to-do list. They hope that if they put you off, you will go away and leave them alone.

### **9: The Silent Striker**

For some reason they have become demotivated and have decided to take silent strike action while remaining at their desk. They have not informed their manager of their grievances but are doing the minimum work they can get away with, or doing it as slowly as possible. Their focus is to deliberately delay everything possible as that is their expression of silent revenge.

### **10: The Player**

They are playing office politics. Their plan is to obstruct your progress and make you look bad in the eyes of your seniors. These kind of people do lack relevant depth on the subject at hand and can never get success as a solo project. They will then produce some last minute miracle that makes them look the hero and receive lots of praise.

### **11: The Ditherer**

When you ask them to make a decision, they reply 'Let me think about it and get back to you'. And that is the last you hear from them unless you chase them up, when they will probably fob you off with another delay. Ditherers' indecision is motivated by differing factors, giving many sub-types of the ditherer. But all of them can severely slow down your progress.



## **12: The Know-it all**

This is the type of person who is convinced he or she knows it all, that all his co-workers are fools and idiots, and that his boss only gained his position through some lucky twist of fate, or some other unfair means of taking what the Know-it All is sure should be his or her rightful position.

In the following sections, we'll look at how to get the best out of each of these difficult people successfully so that they do not delay your progress in achieving your goals.

# Chapter 1

## The Pedantic Rule Follower



“First, the Rules of Engagement for this meeting ...”

## **The Learning Objectives**

1. You will learn how to build up the commitment of the pedantic rule follower.
2. You will learn that to get the best out of the other person it is wise never to challenge him/her.
3. You will also learn that the best way to get the work done is by giving the responsibility to your team members and not the instructions.

## **The Pedantic Rule Follower**

This is the type of person who insists on following the rules to the letter, even when it is explained to him (or her) that the situation is urgent and speed is essential. He is more concerned that he has done everything correctly, even if it means that the goal is missed. He is rigid and has no situational flexibility.

If you get frustrated with his apparent inability to grasp your need for speed and you challenge him to work more quickly, he will dig his heels in. He will match your frustration with his performance and with his frustration with you for harassing him. This type of scenario can quickly escalate either into a full-blown shouting match or he will deliberately continue with his work at an even slower pace.

Please remember that frustration is the outcome of expectations not being met. But once to accept the situation/person and then only develop relevant understanding the journey towards the meaningful relationship becomes smooth.

## **So how to get the best out of the Pedantic Rule Follower successfully so that he cooperates with you and your goal is achieved?**

1. The most important point to remember is to never challenge him to work faster or to break the rules for you. Keep any frustration you may feel with him under wraps and speak to him calmly.
2. Explain the situation and the deadline, and the cost of not meeting that deadline, and ask him if that cost can be afforded. Please focus to share this as an information and not as a complaint so that the other person doesn't feel the need to defend himself.
3. Give him the responsibility for finding a solution for you so that he feels his wisdom is valuable and valued. Many people feel powerful to give instructions but in the process they lose respect and success too.
4. Give him the feeling that he is the one who has the power to affect the outcome of this situation. You must have experienced that once freedom is going to a child even, he brings the best out of him. With freedom comes the responsibility as well.
5. The strategy shared by him will certainly be based on his knowledge and experience. Respect is wisdom and he will be fully committed to you and the job at hand. Only focus to share correct and relevant information on the subject. Never force the information and don't put any pressure to bring the best outcome. Remember people only make mistakes out of fear of committing mistakes.

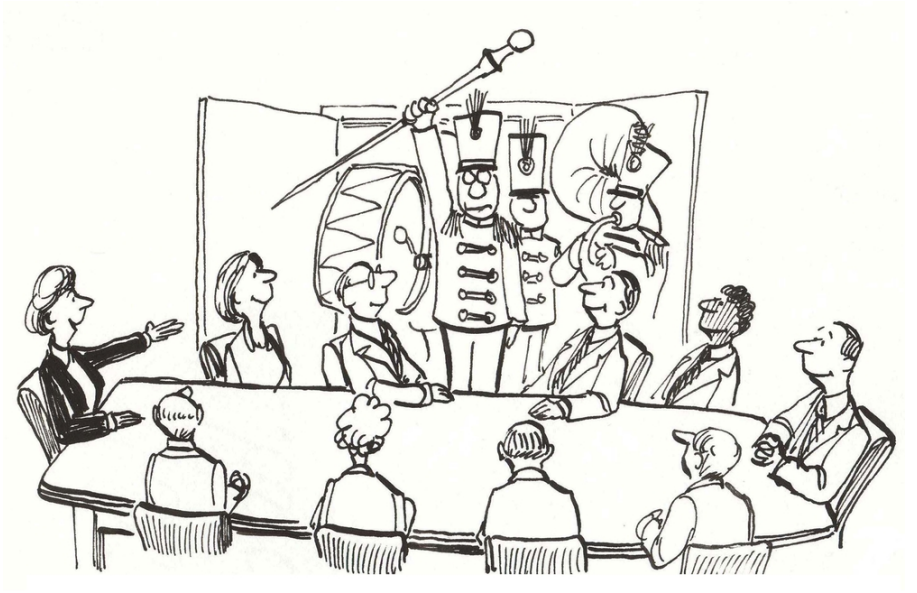
## **Remove His Fear**

The pedantic rule follower's fear is of being criticised for being wrong, and thus not being accepted or approved of. Therefore to avoid this he wants to do his work perfectly. But for him to be able to work perfectly he needs to work on his own plan and plan his own deadlines. Once he knows the deadline then he is clear on how to make a plan of his own; working on his own priorities and also deciding on what to do and what not to do.

By asking him to help you solve your problem with the reassurance that you accept he has to work within the existing rules, you are empowering him to use his intelligence to find a creative solution for you. The feeling of being powerful releases his ability to think creatively and gives him the power of situational flexibility.

## Chapter 2

# The Showman



“Let me present today’s speaker!”

## **The Learning Objectives**

1. You will learn how to get the best out of those people who are only loud in their expressions but are practically worth nothing.
2. You will learn that during the process of managing the Showman, how to embarrass him and then save him from the embarrassment as well. Then he will be on your side.
3. You will learn how to respect and care for the person who is hollow from within but he is an integral part of your team.

## **The Showman**

This is the type of person who is often hugely entertaining and highly popular within the workplace, so he (or she) may seem an unlikely obstacle to your progress in implementing your strategies. Indirectly he is an expert in delaying all productive work and never gets blamed for that as well.

He is thrilled to feel that people listen to him and are unable to continue their required productive performance. He gets a kick out of this and thus feels encouraged to continue his similar performance in the future as well.

However, his (or her) problem is that he talks too much. At meetings he wants his voice to be heard and wants to be seen as the star of the show. Even if he does not have anything productive to add to the matter under discussion, he will have a lot to say about any topic - possibly nothing relevant. Any meeting he attends becomes a long performance, wasting your time, although it may seem that your colleagues find it enjoyable entertainment.

## **So how to get the best out of the Showman type successfully so that he cooperates with you and your goal is achieved?**

This type of person lacks depth of knowledge on many subjects and has developed a protective way of distracting attention from this lack through being humorous.

What you need is a technique for handling him so that he will stop showing off at meetings that you attend together in the future and also will work actively with you as a team.

During the meeting when he is taking centre stage, you need to analyse what he is saying into points and to feed back a concise summary to him. For example, you might say, "So you are saying that point one is (whatever he has said), point two is (another of his statements), and point three is (another of his statements), and so on, yes?" Acknowledge his confirmation.

He then understands that you are listening to him, taking careful note of everything he is saying. He is becoming conscious of what he has said. You then continue by asking him, "I want to value what you are saying. Will you please help me understand the logical link between these three points?"

He will not be able to do this easily as a link between the three points probably does not exist. He is feeling caught red handed in his own net. He will feel embarrassed at showing himself up in this way, and will become silent.



## **Saving Him from Embarrassment**

You need to save him from his embarrassment by saying to the meeting, “I think what (Mr Showman) meant to say was ...” and then follow it with some relevant points that he can then claim as indeed being his intention.

By doing this, he recognises that you have a clear understanding on the topic that he does not have, and that you have saved him from disclosing that lack of knowledge publicly.

In future, he is unlikely to talk out of turn at meetings that you attend together and will listen to your contributions, feeling he is a part of your team. The magical part is that he will also stay focused to learn from you to develop and establish his own credibility

# Chapter 3

## The Workers' Champion



**"He refuses to change the lightbulb  
until we change management style."**

## **The Learning Objectives**

1. You will learn how to bring the mind of the Workers' Champion to balance and motivate him to remain focused on the specified productivity and the profitability of the organisation.
2. You will learn to focus on the intentions of others and plan to manage from that base but never get confused by the tone of his voice which can be misleading.

## **The Workers' Champion**

This type of person has an attitude of 'Us, The Poorly Paid Workers vs. 'You, The Rich Fat Cat Management'. When you ask him (or her) to implement a strategy, he assesses it against his benchmark of whether it benefits the workers. He may challenge you directly on this point or may quietly sabotage and delay changes that he does not approve of. He is not at all focused on the growth of the organisation.

His only focus is to attack the management and establish himself as a hero to the workers. Practically he may not even be caring for the workers. He has accepted his primary role is to find faults in the management and convince the workers that he is deeply concerned about their welfare even at the cost of enhancing productivity and profitability of the organisation.

**So how to get the best out of the Workers' Champion type successfully so that he cooperates with you and your goal is achieved?**

The Workers' Champion has a strong belief system and will not easily back down. It is also important to recognise that he does

have the interests of the organisation as a whole at heart. However, are his values in alignment with the organisational values? In the longer term if they are not aligned, he may need encouraging to move on to another organisation that is a better match for his beliefs.

### **Align His Values with Organisational Values**

In the short term and especially if his values are in alignment with the organisation values, you would be wise to listen to what he is suggesting, even though he can seem aggressive in his approach to you. Listen to understand his intentions and not to reply to his strident tone. His tone may be saying 'I think you are an idiot for not considering this factor of how your proposal impacts on the workers'.

However, if you want him to cooperate with you both now and in the future, you would be advised to ignore the tone of voice and openly consider the factor he is pointing out to you. Allow a discussion to develop on it, seeking his opinion.

By adopting this approach, you will earn his respect and cooperation, and may even benefit from an improved proposal.

# Chapter 4

## The Information Junkie



"I need a list of specific unknown problems that we'll encounter."

## **The Learning Objectives**

1. You will learn to help the Information Junkie learn, how to filter the information from the ocean depth of information as per the need of the project at hand.
2. You will learn how to accept and respect the need of the other person and then manage him accordingly to achieve your goals.
3. You will learn, how to establish the relevance of the information shared by him and ignoring the irrelevant part without hurting or ignoring his feelings.

## **The Information Junkie**

For this type of person, information is power, and they can never get enough of it. They will not make a decision until they have all the information, and having ALL the information is a never ending excuse to not proceed. This is based on the programming during childhood to focus on the perfection always without knowing that excellence is better than perfection.

They would not accept that they are slow at making decisions, it is just that it is vital to them to just get one more piece of evidence, and then another, and so on. They are practically not clear that the need is to gather only the information relevant to the project at hand otherwise the ocean depth of the information available will result in madness.

If you press them to make a decision, they may dig their heels in and become more adamant about the need for further research to be done before proceeding. The more you press them, the further

entrenched they become. If you have the authority to insist they make a decision, they will have to do it but they may always feel doubtful whether their decision was correct and thus will not be fully in support of it.

**So how to get the best out of the Information Junkie type successfully so that he cooperates with you and your goal is achieved?**

To handle this type of person successfully, firstly you must show him that you respect and accept his need to be armed with the complete information before proceeding, and not insist that he makes a decision without it. By you doing this he feels that you are not threatening his need for information, and so he becomes less defensive and more open to your next questions.

You need to politely ask him what is the relevance of the further information he requires to the goal that you are both aiming to achieve. It may even be that he is highlighting a genuine issue that you have omitted to consider. Perhaps it is your secondary role to seek out the relevant information from his sources, just like a hunter. As your own homework, even before delegating the responsibility to him, you must define the relevant areas to be organised to achieve the results.

If this is not the case, and he recognises that the information he is insisting on is not actually relevant, it is wise not to point that out to him as that will increase his sense of inadequacy, which his whole 'Information Junkie' persona is designed to mask. But none-the-less he is being trained to be your long term associate.

## **Save His Image**

You can save him from publicly acknowledging his fear of inadequacy by asking him some further questions:

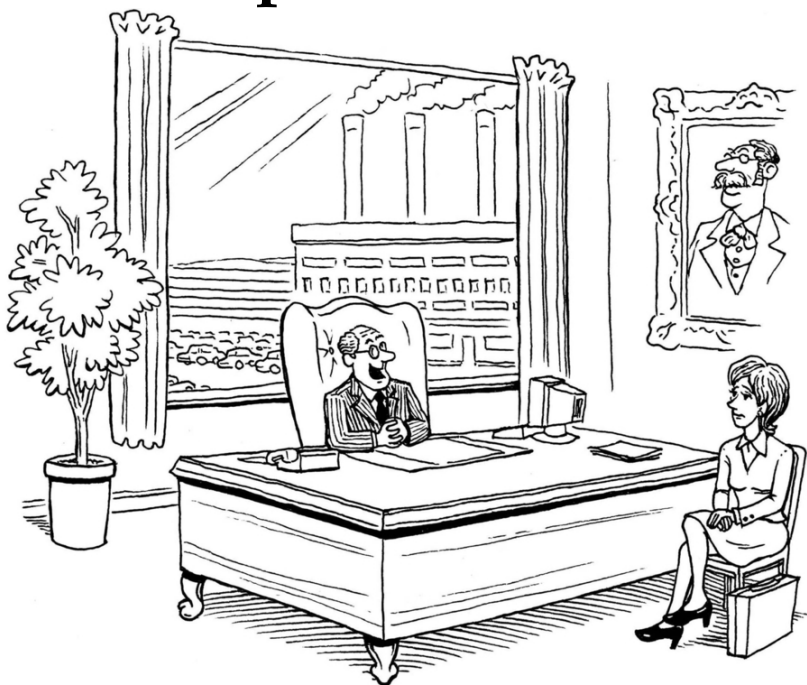
1. Ask him whether the cost of the delay in making and implementing this decision can be afforded.
2. Ask him on what basis can the decision be made now so that a start can be made on its implementation.
3. Ask him whether it is practical to make a start based on the current information, and then to modify the strategy if necessary as and when more information becomes available.

The Information Junkie tends to be a logical rather than an emotional type, so as you guide him gently through an analytical examination of the current situation, without pressing him to make an instant decision, he will be able to analyse the cost/loss variables of making a decision and proceed accordingly.



# Chapter 5

## The Report Commissioner



"I need a list of specific unknown problems that we'll encounter."

## **The Learning Objectives**

1. You will learn how to move ahead to succeed towards your goals without challenging the power of the Report Commissioner.
2. You will learn, to start adopting a different strategy to influence the Report Commissioner to your point of view when he is adamant not to accept the previous one.
3. You will learn it is wise never to make an issue (because the issues can never be solved) but use a diplomatic way to manage the situation.

## **The Report Commissioner**

This type is not indecisive, but is playing a power game. He (or she) deliberately suggests preparing yet another report on a project because he wants to delay it from proceeding without it looking as if he is the one holding it up. He can maintain his innocent stance while achieving his obstructive objective.

Some government bodies may use this approach so as not to upset their electorate. It looks like they are taking action on a contentious issue while not actually proceeding with the project itself. Perhaps by the time the report is published, which can seem to take a long time, the issue will have become less contentious or even forgotten, or circumstances may have changed to make the project either unviable or redundant. In the meantime, the project is not up for further discussion.

## **So how to get the best out of the Report Commissioner type successfully so that he cooperates with you and your goal is achieved?**

Your response to the Report Commissioner depends on the level of power and authority you have in the situation. Where the Report Commissioner holds all the power such as where government bodies are involved, you need to determine whether their action is a genuine need for the information that the report will deliver before a decision can be made or whether it is a way of saying no.

If it is the latter, you need to accept that as being the fact, and not wait for the report to be published before deciding on your next step. You are not accepting their implied refusal as a defeat, but as an indicator that you need to start adopting a different strategy to influence them to your point of view. You need to be creative in finding a way of demonstrating your logical argument to them, which does not resort to emotional tactics.

### **Gaining Clarity**

Think of a child asking his mother for something he wants, and she says 'I will ask your father when he gets home.' Is she actually saying no but wants to avoid telling her child? Maybe she hopes he will have forgotten about what he wanted by the time the father gets home. Children are very creative in finding ways of successfully demonstrating why they must have what they want.

When you are creative and innovative then the other person doesn't have any readymade answer to oppose you. When the logic is strong, relevant and clear then, people are unable to find

means to oppose you. So in this situation either he has to say yes or to remain silent. In both the cases your work is done. Sometimes using a different vocabulary also does the trick.

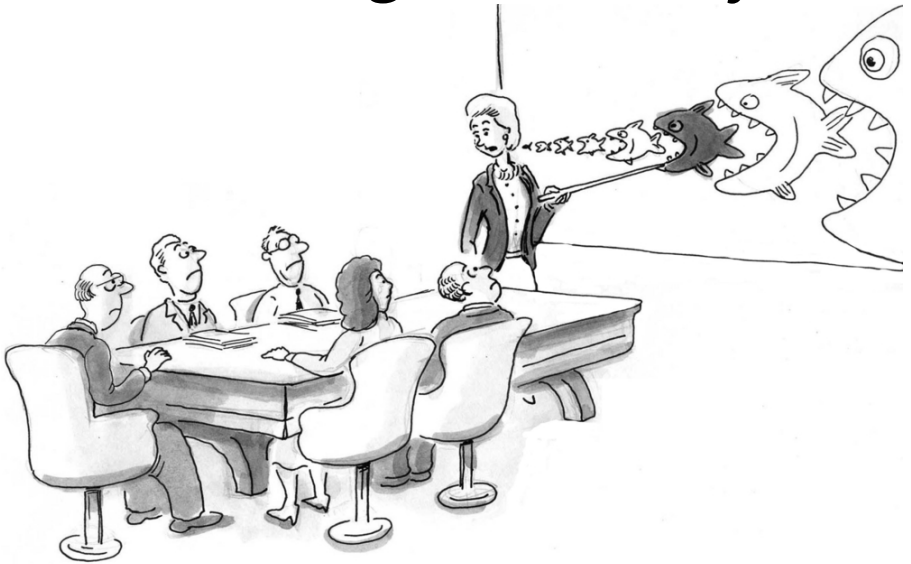
Where your level of power and authority is more or equal with that of the Report Commissioner, your aim must be to not make an issue about your way being the best way. If you make an issue, he is more likely to obstruct your progress by asking for a further report.

Instead you must demonstrate faultless logic for your proposition, and do it in such a way that he can take the credit for it.

Where you hold the power and authority over someone who deliberately obstructs progress by commissioning various reports, you must give him (or her) a very clearly understood deadline with a clear consequence of missing that deadline for any reason. Remember that clear and strong logic itself gives you the authority to move further in the performance.

# Chapter 6

## The Negative Nancy



"This is us."

## **The Learning Objectives**

1. You will learn to understand the intentions of the other person and then define your strategy to present your proposal.
2. You will learn to interpret and then evaluate the information before deciding what and how to respond.

## **The Negative Nancy**

When presented with any idea, the Negative Nancy type says, 'That's not possible because....' or 'That won't work because.....' and then stops. If a proposal has ten positive aspects and one negative one, he (or she) focuses only on the negative one.

This type of approach can be highly demotivating for the person who is presenting the idea to the Negative Nancy type and can result in promising ideas being dismissed too soon which itself is a big loss to the organisation.

**So how to get the best out of the Negative Nancy type successfully so that he cooperates with you and your goal is achieved?**

The Negative Nancy has a natural ability to rapidly analyse a proposition and to highlight the weak points in it. He (or she) is cautious by nature and wants to be prepared so as to avoid failure. His attitude is very different to that of many successful people who tend to think positively and optimistically. Positive thinkers tend to underestimate and under prepare for potential difficulties, believing that a solution will appear when needed.

If you are faced with a Negative Nancy, it is important to not allow yourself to be discouraged by his words. Remain calm and listen to him carefully and intently to seek out the logic in his expressions. Receiving the information doesn't mean you are accepting it as well. It is wise to interpret and then evaluate the information and then only decide what and how to respond.

### **The Simple Solution**

When he tells you about the one negative aspect out of a ten-point plan, he is effectively saying that nine out of the ten points are positive and workable. You can check this out with him by asking, 'So if we can find a solution to the negative point you have identified, then you feel the plan would be workable?'

It is also important to specify whether you are presenting an idea to him to be explored for its possibilities or as a finalised proposition. If it is the latter, he will only be checking it over for any weak points.

If you want to explore a possible plan with him, you need to lead the discussion by asking him open questions and ask him to reserve judgment on all suggestions made until all aspects have been considered. This will encourage his creative thinking and allay his critical thinking.

The Negative Nancy can be an asset to a team as long as there is a balance of more positive thinking styles. Through his highlighting of weak points in a plan, it enables them to be altered and for appropriate contingency plans to be made.

# Chapter 7

## The Bystander



Not  
Responsible  
for  
Anything



## **The Learning Objectives**

1. You will learn how to get the work done from those people who are not willing to accept the responsibility in the first place.
2. You will learn how to help the other person feel valued so that he himself offers to own the responsibility.

## **The Bystander**

This type of person is happy to stand on the sidelines and watch the action, but if you approach him (or her) to help he is quick to reply 'That's not my job'. He won't take responsibility for anything outside of his (very narrow) remit.

He may be sullen, feeling that based on previous experience, he will not get any credit or appreciation for helping you, so why bother? He may be frightened, feeling that if he gets involved in your situation it will result in circumstances beyond his control. A simple 'no' now might save him from a lot of additional work later, or worse, from blame for getting involved.

**So how to get the best out of the Bystander type successfully so that he cooperates with you and your goal is achieved?**

Ask yourself whether you need this particular person or whether you need someone to do a particular task for you. If the latter, ask him to point you to the person who can help you and do not waste any more time on him.

If however the bystander is your only option, then you are going to have to persuade him to pick up the responsibility of helping you. Find a way of giving him credit and appreciation in advance,

so that he feels valued. Tell him that only a responsible person can do this job, and that he is a responsible person. You might also reassure him that if he helps you now, you will do your utmost to ensure that he is not burdened with extra work and pressures as a result.

### **Social Media Image**

If he is still reticent and if it seems appropriate, you could take out your mobile phone and ask to film him. Tell him you would love to post a video of him on various social network sites as an example of a modern day hero, highlighting his achievements (or of a modern day villain, depending on how responsive he has been so far to your persuasions but only as the last option as the fear tactics don't work always.)

Whatever you do, stay calm and do not raise your voice to the Bystander. Imagine him like a sullen or frightened animal that will run off if it hears a sudden noise. Only gentle persuasion will bring him round to helping you if he really is your only source of assistance.

# Chapter 8

## The 'I'm Too Busy' type



**“Busy?”**

## **The Learning Objectives**

1. You will learn how to make the 'I'm too busy' type get the message that he is not indispensable.
2. You will learn how to get the commitment to own the responsibility from those people who are too busy type.

## **The 'I'm Too Busy' type**

When asked for his (or her) input, he says 'I haven't got time to do that' or 'my team is too busy'. He seems overwhelmed and incapable of thinking rationally, and is affronted that you should want to pile yet more tasks on his to-do list. He hopes that if he puts you off, you will go away and leave him alone.

There could be various reasons why he is reacting in this way. He may be genuinely overloaded at that time with a crisis or with a short-term shortage of resources. However a capable type would offer you an alternative method of achieving your goal, or at least tell you the time when he can complete your task.

More likely is that he is generally not well organised and is not managing his resources well to achieve his goals. He is trying to escape from further responsibility as he is struggling to manage the responsibility he already has. He is frightened, feeling that if he agrees to take on your task for you, he will be lumbered with yet another job to do.

In some cases, he may be trying to prove he is indispensable by showing how valuable he is.

## **So how to get the best out of the 'I'm Too Busy' type successfully so that he cooperates with you and your goal is achieved?**

In the last situation, you can arrange to outsource the 'I'm Too Busy, see how indispensable I am' type's work to someone else either inside or outside the organisation. You may need to repeat this three or four times; by then he will have got the message that his work can be done even without him, and he will stop saying he is too busy. He will fully accept the responsibility given him to maintain his importance and to hold on to his position.

### **In Other Situations**

You can acknowledge that the 'I'm Too Busy because I'm disorganised' type is indeed too busy right now to help you, and ask whether he can help you at a slightly later time – 'Can you do this task by the end of the day?'

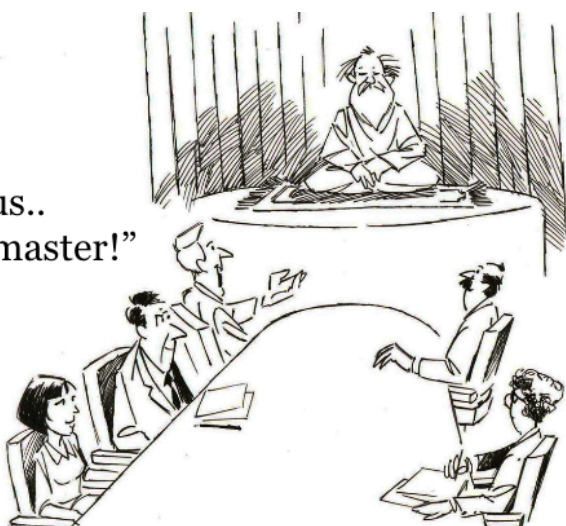
You can also offer to help him, either in person or by sending one of your team. 'Is there some part of your workload that I can do for you so that you are free to do the work I need done?'

Your aim is not to develop him to do his overall job in a more organised way, but to help him organise himself in the short term to get your task completed. By reducing the perceived pressure on him, he is more capable of rational thought and can plan how he can help you achieve what you are asking of him.

# Chapter 9

## The Silent Striker

“Guide us..  
oh Webmaster!”



## **The Learning Objectives**

1. You will learn how to diagnose the Silent Striker.
2. You will learn how to understand the need of the Silent Striker and motivate him to own the responsibility and justify the job.
3. You will learn, how to manage a silent striker if he is your boss.

## **The Silent Striker**

For some reason he (or she) has become demotivated and has decided to take silent strike action while remaining at his desk. He has not informed his manager of his grievances but is doing the minimum work he can get away with, or doing it as slowly as possible.

This type of person can be seen in the corridors of some organisations; he can be recognised by the slowness of his walking speed as he dawdles to his destination.

**So how to get the best out of the Silent Striker type successfully so that he cooperates with you and your goal is achieved?**

If the Silent Striker is one of your team members, you must investigate the reason for his demotivation and address it accordingly. Many young people join organisations full of motivation that gradually seeps away if the career and development opportunities open to them are unsupportive. Even if there are limited opportunities, a good manager can maintain motivation through genuine praise of the Silent Striker's valuable contribution, preferably based on situations from the recent past.

## **If He is Your Boss**

It may be that the Silent Striker is demotivated because he has been promoted beyond his capability and does not know how to do his job fully. If this version of the Silent Striker is your boss, your aim is not to change him completely but to get your current goal achieved. If you share your knowledge and ask his approval to proceed, he may well support you. 'In my opinion, we can achieve this goal in this way, what do you think?' This approach allows the Silent Striker boss to gracefully accept your greater knowledge without losing face.

## **The Outside Silent Striker**

If you come across the Silent Striker outside of your organisation, you must take an interest in him and his achievements in order to strike up a rapport with him. Ask him how long he has worked for the organisation. Ask him about his achievements in the job over that time. This method may take several applications, depending on how unmotivated he is, but will gradually enthuse him to work well for you. Again, you are not aiming to change him but to get him to cooperate with you to achieve your goal.



# Chapter 10

## The Player



“Remember, I’m behind you all the way.  
WAY behind you.”

## **The Learning Objectives**

You will learn, how to outsmart his over smart tactics

## **The Player**

This type of person is playing office politics. His (or her) plan is to obstruct your progress and make you look bad in the eyes of your seniors. He will then produce some last minute miracle that makes him look the hero and receive all the praise.

**So how to get the best out of the Player type successfully so that he cooperates with you and your goal is achieved?**

The Player type normally lacks true wisdom and skill, which is why he has to resort to underhand tactics to look successful. Your aim is to neutralise the damage he can do to you and your goal. It is important to ask him for his input regularly right from the beginning, and to ensure that you get that input put on the record in some way. By involving him from the outset, even if it is to seek and record his opinion, he will not be able to obstruct progress as what is being done already involves him. If he obstructs it, he is obstructing himself, which he will not want to do.

## **Counter His Miracle Strategy**

Even if his opinion is that he does not know what to do about the project, that opinion must go onto the public record so that later on he cannot claim that he has produced a last minute miracle. With the Player type, your aim is to outsmart him in this way and then to let him fully share the credit with you to gain his future cooperation.

# Chapter 11

## The Ditherer



## **The Learning Objectives**

1. You will learn how to understand his difficulty in making a decision and support him towards the success of the project.
2. You will learn how to get a quick decision from the Ditherer.

## **The Ditherer**

This is the type of person who, when you ask him (or her) to make a decision, replies 'Let me think about it and get back to you'. And that is the last you hear from him unless you chase him up, when he will probably fob you off with another delay. Ditherers' indecision is motivated by differing factors, giving many sub-types of the ditherer. But all of them can severely slow down your progress.

## **So how to get the best out of the Ditherer type successfully so that he cooperates with you and your goal is achieved?**

Unlike the Report Commissioner type who is deliberately delaying progress by asking for a lengthy report to be prepared before he can make a decision, the Ditherer is not purposely setting out to get in the way of progress. Nor is he looking for more and more information like the Information Junkie. The Ditherer just finds it very hard to make decisions.

There can be various reasons for his difficulty in decision making: maybe a fear of making the wrong decision, maybe a reluctance to accept the responsibility for his decisions, or maybe his mind is so cluttered that he cannot think rationally. Whatever the reason, your purpose is not to help him develop his decision making

skills, but to know how to handle him so that your objective is achieved with the minimum of delay. It is more important to see that he is feeling comfortable after conveying the decision.

### **The Logical Options Strategy**

Once you become aware that you are dealing with a Ditherer, you need to stop waiting for him to get back to you, and start taking a more proactive approach. You need to make it as easy as possible for him to give you an instant decision. The fact is that people do not actually make decisions, (although they think they made them) but decisions get made based on the information available. So when you approach the Ditherer for a decision, be well prepared with between three to five logical options, with the logic for each clearly spelled out.

If deciding between three to five options still proves too much for him to manage, you could reduce it down to just two options. The question becomes 'Do you want to do this or that?' At least then if the answer is 'Neither', a dialogue has begun about what it is he does actually want.

With the Ditherer type, your aim is to help decision making become easier for him, and to let him take the credit for making such great decisions.

# Chapter 12

## The 'Know-it All'



## **The Learning Objectives**

1. You will learn how to set work place boundaries after acknowledging his in-depth knowledge on a particular subject.
2. You will learn how to maintain the balance during meetings while respecting the opinion of all team members.

## **How to handle the ‘Know-it All’**

This is the type of person who is convinced he or she knows it all, that all his co-workers are fools and idiots, and that his boss only gained his position through some lucky twist of fate, or some other unfair means of taking what the Know-it All is sure should be his or her rightful position. From this lofty position, the Know-it All thinks it is perfectly acceptable to interrupt meetings when he wants to speak. He does his best to outsmart his boss and to show him up as inadequate whenever possible. He thinks nothing of embarrassing his colleagues by making them feel small.

## **So how can you handle the Know-it All type successfully so that he cooperates with you and your goal is achieved?**

Firstly, assess whether his view of himself as ‘special’ compared to you and his peers has any basis in reality. If for instance he was a child prodigy in applied mathematics, he may well be genuinely dismissive of those around him in an office accounts department and frustrated by the lack of opportunities to use his talents fully. There are many examples of extremely high achievers in the business and academic world whose prodigious talents were coupled with very little emotional intelligence. The best way to handle the genuine Know-it All

would be to harness his talents in a rarefied environment, keeping him distant from the 'ordinary' people. This would mean moving him out of the general accounts department into a specialist division, for example.

### **Clarity**

However, it may well be that the Know-it All's belief in his superiority is an example of an over-inflated ego at work that does not match the reality of his skills and talents. He's a false Know-it All, wearing a mask of confidence and arrogance to hide, even from himself, a deep hole of insecurity within. As with all personality traits, all of us can be affected by insecurity to a greater or lesser degree; it only becomes a problem when the degree to which it impacts our behaviour falls towards the outer, more extreme, edges of the scale.

The problem for the false Know-it All is that he is not able to see the reality of the situations he finds himself in. He is not able to recognise that everyone in the team is equally valuable in their different ways, as they all contribute something to the whole endeavour. He doesn't see that the fact he is the junior, his boss the senior, reflects a difference in relative experience within the organisation, even if not in qualifications. Your purpose in handling the false Know-it All is not to heal his insecurities, but to know how to handle him effectively so that your goals are achieved.

### **Focus**

The best tactic with a false Know-it All is to set very clear boundaries around acceptable behaviour, with clear consequences of crossing those boundaries. You have to be



prepared to enforce those consequences or he will walk straight over you and your boundaries.

You could tell him that he is valuable to you as a member of your team, and that his contribution makes a difference that you recognise and appreciate. Be specific, rather than general: "The report you prepared last week was detailed and accurate, and flagged up various areas to investigate further. That was very helpful, thanks." Specific appreciation has more impact than generalised praise: "You're a great report writer" builds the ego without grounding it in reality.

### **At the Same Time**

You need to tell him that you also value other team members and their contributions, and you need to hear what they are saying in meetings, and you can't do that if he is talking over them. Tell him that he also looks like a fool when he interferes and interrupts, and you value him too much to want him to look like a fool. Tell him that you value what he has to say, and so you will ensure that you ask him for his opinion during meetings, but that he has to wait his turn to be asked.

### **Structured Meetings**

You could run meetings in a more structured way by asking attendees to write down their opinions on the subject in discussion, and you'll ask for them in turn. Tell him that your opinion of him goes down when you hear that he has been making other team members feel small, and you don't want to think less of him, as he is a valuable team member to you.

## **Tell Him Clearly**

What the consequences will be for him if he doesn't do as you ask and change his behaviour with this and the other areas you have highlighted to him. Should you apply this approach with the Know-it All and he takes no notice, you will need to enforce the consequences you agreed upon. You will need to stand your ground, and hold firm to your authority. You may also need to apply the shampoo principle with the false Know-it All: **Rinse and repeat.**

## Conclusion

**As 'How to get the best out of difficult people?', hit the dust...**

So that's the list of the twelve types of difficult people you're likely to come across in business, and our strategies and tactics for how to handle them successfully. How many of the types did you recognise? Wouldn't it be great to get them out of your way? We know from experience that our strategies work, but we'd be really interested to get your feedback on how you get on using our tactics. You're very welcome to give us your feedback or to ask any further questions by emailing Dr Rakesh Chopra directly on [drchopra1954@gmail.com](mailto:drchopra1954@gmail.com).

If you've got a situation with someone hampering your business progress that hasn't been covered by 'How to get the best out of difficult people?', Dr Chopra offers a complimentary half hour mentoring session where you could discuss it with him. Contact him on [drchopra1954@gmail.com](mailto:drchopra1954@gmail.com) to arrange a mutually convenient time.

# ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Dr Rakesh Chopra is a visionary strategist focused to mentor ambitious leaders. He brings more than thirty years of experience in the fields of medicine, business management and spirituality to his work while mentoring ambitious leaders.

Why build up stress first and then manage it when it can be eradicated in the first place itself. This gives him an in-depth understanding of human nature (including relationship compatibility) combined with the ability to visualise innovative strategies that can be applied in your life and business to accelerate growth. People at the senior / top management normally have the ability to manage most of the situations but are stuck in a few. Their friends don't have the understanding and the relevant wisdom on the subject and they can't discuss their problems or the visionary projects with their subordinates, so feel lonely at times. Dr Chopra very well fits in this role.