



TAKE CONTROL OF YOUR CAREER

Second Edition

WITH BONUS AUDIO DOWNLOAD ON PAGE 515

JONAR NADER

How to Lose Friends and Infuriate Your Boss

Published by

 **PLUTONIUM**

PO Box 15, Pyrmont NSW 2009

Info@LoseFriends.com

This book, including design and quotations, © 2002, 2010 by Jonar Nader.

This book is copyright, and all rights are reserved. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study, research, or review as permitted under the Copyright Act, no part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or on the Web, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, whether digital, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, printing, recording, or otherwise, without prior written permission from the publisher. Please address all requests to Info@LoseFriends.com

This book is sold without warranty of any kind, either expressed or implied, in respect to the contents of this book, including but not limited to implied warranties for the book's quality, accuracy, completeness, performance, merchantability, or fitness for any particular purpose.

Neither the author, publisher, nor its dealers, distributors, representatives, or agents will be liable to the purchaser or any other person or entity with respect to any liability, loss, or damage caused or alleged to be caused directly or indirectly by this book.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 • 15 14 13 12 11 10

National Library of Australia. Cataloguing-in-Publication Data.

Nader, Jonar

How to Lose Friends and Infuriate Your Boss

Second Edition

Includes index

ISBN 978 0 646 50461 2

1. Supervision of employees. 2. Career development. 3. Supervisors.

658.302

For information on how to contact the author or the publisher, please visit

www.LoseFriends.com

I am indebted to each of my ex-bosses.

THE *vulgar* BOSSES
FORCED ME TO LEARN ABOUT RESPECT.

THE *selfish* BOSSES
HELPED ME TO UNDERSTAND COMPASSION.

THE *generous* BOSSES
ALLOWED ME TO SPREAD MY WINGS.

THE *patient* BOSSES
KEPT ME ON THE STRAIGHT AND NARROW.



THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED TO
THE *ghastly* BOSSES
WHO GAVE ME AMPLE REASONS
TO FOCUS ON MY CAREER
SO THAT I COULD ESCAPE FROM THEIR GRIP.

IT IS ALSO DEDICATED TO
THE *gracious* BOSSES
WHO ALLOWED ME TO MAKE MISTAKES
FROM WHICH I WAS ABLE TO LEARN
ABOUT FAILURE AND SUCCESS.

CHAPTER EIGHT

I'M NOT A RACIST, BUT...

Pride and prejudice in the workplace

*The trick is
to turn your
stumbling blocks
into stepping stones*

D O YOU BELIEVE THAT YOU HAVE BEEN DENIED WORK OPPORTUNITIES BECAUSE YOUR BOSS DOES NOT LIKE SOMETHING

about you? This chapter explains how racism and discrimination work, and what you can do to minimise their effect on you.

At its essence, racism describes a preference for one group over another and the belief that one's own 'race' is superior to another 'race'. Regardless, I doubt that we operate at that level. At school, at work, and within our community, people are not concerned with the pure issues of race. They contend with its constituent parts that include discrimination, inequality, sexism, chauvinism, favouritism, nepotism, bias, preference, fear, and intolerance.

If you are trying to fight racism, forget it. By locking horns with fundamental human emotions, you will lose. Racism is not the enemy. It is not something that you can identify as an external foe, because it exists within each of us

— not because we are all racists, but because we all harbour the basic ingredients that could easily ignite to form inexplicable feelings about others.

Although I do not condone racism, I believe that the many complaints about it are misdirected because people are being persecuted or disadvantaged based on *other* human factors, not on their race.

I'M GUILTY, BUT NOT OF RACISM

Although I do not know many racists, I do know many people who discriminate against others based not on 'race' but on 'human' factors. I must admit to being guilty of that myself — meaning that I find some people attractive and some people unattractive in their attitudes, their way of life, their physical appearance, their personality, and their intellectual and spiritual expression.

Could you have a physical and intimate relationship with *anyone*, regardless of hygiene, looks, habits, odour, general appearance, age, and beliefs? Marriages end because one partner could not cope with the other's table manners. Friends part because they could not tolerate each other's personal habits. Even those who meet the person of their dreams could be easily repulsed by peculiar personal preferences.

I must also admit to exercising that degree of discrimination at the business level — meaning that I prefer not to work with people whose business conduct and social graces are not to my liking. The dubious ethical standards of some

professionals are disgusting, whereby I become uneasy about transacting with them. I can detect con-artists from afar, and I want nothing to do with such manipulators and liars. I prefer to avoid people whose negative or destructive views grate on my spirit. I would not want to work with people whose morals and principles are contrary to what I can cope with. That type of feeling is not one that I can always justify to my colleagues in 'words'. Do you call that racism? I call it human nature.

CATALOGUING THE WORLD

When meeting people for the first time, our brain goes into overdrive as we unintentionally categorise them. Some ignorant people do make erroneous judgements based on nationality or skin colour. Although this cannot be condoned, it is understandable. Society superficially operates on the basis of 'image'. The concept of 'branding' works by positioning the qualities of a brand in the consumer's mind. Consumers could, over time, be led to believe that certain brand names do represent certain qualities. If you were asked to identify the best brands in the world, you would probably mention some that you respect, but with which you have never had any association. Similarly, you are likely to have pre-conceived notions about cultures with which you have never come into contact.

Countries, too, have brand qualities. Regardless of fact, some people form opinions about products, depending

upon the country of manufacture. Here is a simple test for which there are no right or wrong answers, merely 'perceptions' that you might have formed over the years. Answer these questions based on which of the two countries would offer the better product in your opinion: 1) Chocolate from Belgium or Bhutan; 2) Whisky from Scotland or Sweden; 3) Cheese from Norway or New Zealand; 4) Stereo systems from Japan or Jamaica; 5) Perfume from France or Fiji; 6) Fast cars from Germany or Greece; 7) Computers from Taiwan or the Tonga. There are also perceived origins for different types of food such as curry, pasta, pizza, and noodle dishes.

Consider the judgements we make about professions. At gatherings, people react differently towards those who say that their occupations are astronauts, surgeons, car salespeople, judges, shop assistants, undertakers, students, accountants, psychiatrists, film producers, or street-sweepers. The unemployed could receive an altogether different reception.

Long tradition gives 'colours' superstitious attributes. Some people would never drive a red car. Some insist that purple is the colour that offers good fortune. In some countries, yellow represents bad luck. These are compounded by the inexplicable, yet popular beliefs, that certain numbers represent good luck. People move to a house whose street number adds up to a 'preferred' integer or they buy a car whose registration number-plate includes the digit '3' or excludes the

number '666'. Other people would not work on the fourth or thirteenth floors of a building, and some buildings do not have such floors. There is no explaining how these things are rationalised. In addition, there are fundamentalists, fanatics, extremists, and those who subscribe to astrology, numerology, and a dozen other mystical cults. So as you can see, racism is hardly the major obstacle to human harmony.

If the brain can make judgements about brands, why can it not make judgements about people? If people can be misled about brands, why can't they be misled about other aspects such as cultures, nationalities, countries, languages, gender, age groups, sexuality, and modes of dress — in fact, anything that is 'foreign' to them?

TARRED WITH THE SAME BRUSH

You might have heard a friend say, 'I would never again deal with XYZ Company because it's hopeless and it doesn't care about its customers.' It could well be that the company employs 300 000 people, yet your friend would be making a judgement based on what only *three* of its employees have done. That is a similar reaction to those who judge a whole race, country, or religion, based on what three people have done or said to them, or based on what they have seen on television. Foreign nationals have repeatedly objected to the images that the media portrays about their country and lifestyle. Some argue that travel advertisements showing natives in their national dress are misleading because such costumes

are only worn at rare cultural events. What we see about a country through television does not necessarily portray the real day-to-day environment.

It is neither fair nor sensible to form unsubstantiated opinions about people and cultures. Unfortunately, that is how the human brain works when it is stirred with a cocktail of emotions and irrationalities.

Discrimination extends to social bigotry that forces some people to change suburbs merely to avoid the stigma associated with an ‘unfashionable’ address. Many colour their hair or undergo plastic surgery, believing that they will appease their social group or believing that they will look younger. Some even go to the trouble of changing their name to blend into their new community.

BREAKING THROUGH THE GLASS CEILING

In the work environment, it is important to be aware of some of your personal aspects that could detract from your capabilities. Although you do not want people to categorise you based on inexplicable predispositions, there is no point in trying to change human nature. To form small clubs to recruit plenty of ‘us’ to fight all of ‘them’ is counterproductive. Organisations are advised against forming groups for only men or only women — a practice that has become rife. Gender-based groups endorse the unhealthy ‘them-and-us’ attitude, where each group tries to reinforce its own position at the expense of the opposite sex. That approach is like

combating crime with crime — alienating the innocent and fair-minded employees who cannot understand why such divisions exist. Fighting years of male domination cannot be won by creating female domination. The preferred solution would be to teach executives about reducing, not inflaming, chauvinism. This means that we need to educate or to stop the perpetrators, not encourage the underdog to adopt unpleasant means with which to combat the problems, because that course of action creates *new* struggles.

Employees who complain that they have hit a glass ceiling ‘based on gender’ are right in that the ceiling does exist. It is not always true to say that they have been disadvantaged only because of their gender. Rather, they have been disadvantaged because they have to deal with discriminating, small-minded executives. The problems do not lie within a person’s gender, but within the chauvinists themselves who are discriminators, full stop.

*Fighting years
of male
domination
cannot be won
by creating
female
domination*

Among those I have counselled are men and women who have *insisted* that they were passed up for promotion because of their gender. Others cry that they were ignored because of their *race*. As I was developing my career, some employers had a hang-up about my *age*, and for a while, I internalised the problem. They would tell me that I was too young for the positions I wanted (in the days when age discrimination was not illegal). Perhaps they did not like the colour of my eyes, but they could not bring themselves to

explain that, so they used my age as an excuse. Who knows? It would be impossible to prove. Some people say it is gender, the young say it is age, the short say it is height, and the list goes on — each internalising the problem, yet all the while, the problem exists within the perpetrator, *not* the victim. The result is just as painful for all the victims — each one thinking that it is for a different reason, whereas each

*I would dismiss
any manager
who believes
that women are
less intelligent
than men*

person was discriminated against for the *same* reason. That reason is the close-minded manager who does not know any better. Having said that, each person could have triggered discrimination for a *different* reason. Some employees are disadvantaged because of their mode of dress, the way they speak, their work ethic, their personality, or any of a hundred-and-one other things, but to suggest that it is simply gender or race would be a mistake.

I would dismiss any manager who believes that women are less intelligent than men; or that skin colour is a reason to hinder someone's advancement. Mind you, I have heard women say words to the effect of, 'We have had it so bad for so long, I don't see why men can't suffer a little now.' I have also heard feminists say, 'No-one helped me to climb the corporate ladder, so why should I help her?' They too would be dismissed from my organisation.

Men and women are not born thinking that they are better than each other. No-one is born feeling that a particular race is better than any other. Unfortunately, those who

do hold such beliefs are the victims of cultural conditioning. Managers who do not promote the opposite sex are guilty of blatant disregard for equality in the workplace.

It is all very well to say that in this country or in that country, members of a minority race feel aggrieved. Try going to the aggrieved person's country and see if the citizens will not discriminate against you. I used to hear stories that, in some countries, people of my race were not allowed into restaurants. A few years ago I happened to be a business foreigner, visiting what could be described as one of the most advanced nations, where I was physically refused entry into two high-class restaurants because I was an Aussie! There were signs on the door that read 'No Westerners'. If I had not experienced it for myself, I would not have believed it to be anything other than an exaggerated story. My fancy charge-card meant nothing there. The welcome sign on the door was not for me. I am not complaining. I am just saying that it happens both ways, and it is appalling that it should ever happen. If you want to do something constructive, you need to understand some of the issues that affect you personally, and deal with those yourself, without trying to change human nature. You cannot change what cannot be changed.

To aggrieved employees I want to say that I agree that they are sometimes disadvantaged, but I urge them to find out the real reasons. To think that it is gender-based is another form of social brainwashing. Those who forewarn young people about gender imbalance would be just as guilty as

those who brainwash their tribe into thinking that one race is better than another. Young people grow up feeling powerless, always on the lookout for a problem that does not really exist in the way that they have been warned about it. Furthermore, if workers are too quick to attribute their hurdles to gender, they would be doing themselves a disservice by not delving into the real issues that cause conflict or disharmony between themselves and their boss.

EQUALITY FOR ALL?

Although the noble would say that we are all created equal, I am not sure that we *are* equal. In what way are we equal? In social terms? In our looks? In our strengths? In our capabilities? In our knowledge? In our tolerances? In our maturity? In our preferences? In our fantasies? In our pleasures? I have not met two people who are alike. So how equal are we, apart from the fact that we all bleed, hurt, and love?

The initial step in minimising the effect of discrimination on you is to become aware of what it is about you that others could misunderstand, misjudge, dislike, or fear. Frequently we are blinded by our own peculiarities because we are automatically conditioned to *ignore* the prevalent and obvious. For example, if a small stone hits your car's windscreen and chips a small piece of glass in front of your line of sight, you are likely to be distracted by the damage. Initially, the irritating speck causes focussing difficulties. Then, when you least expect it, you are distracted by something else and

you forget about the chip in the windscreen. Your eyes compensate for it because you are conditioned to ignore the problem. These are mechanisms of survival. The mind and body are brilliantly designed in this respect. We are able to adjust to some things to the point where we are no longer aware of their existence. The downside is that we find it difficult to understand what it is that we do that irritates others.

THE BIGGEST OBSTACLE OF ALL

What would you say is the single biggest obstacle that triggers the highest incidence of workplace discrimination? What is the biggest factor that retards a person's career in the corporate environment? Since 1995, Logictivity, my consulting company, has been working to identify the major contributor to racially-based discrimination for employees. We have conducted numerous tests and focus groups to examine how people react to each other on the basis of: perceived power; skin colour; country of origin; mode of dress; wealth; level of education and qualifications; social position; personal appearance; hygiene; and native tongue.

The predictable results from these nine categories did not answer the question: what is the single biggest obstacle that triggers the highest incidence of discrimination? The answer was 'none of the above'. It was a tenth factor that no-one in our workgroups had been able to guess. Are you able to guess the most important factor that causes the most problems for individuals in the workplace? It is also

the factor that inhibits career advancement. The most significant obstacle is a person's *accent!*

There are three categories of accents. The first is the 'pleasant accent' that included 'cute', 'amusing', and 'romantic'. These ranked highly on the social front, but did not score so well on the serious business front — meaning that those with pleasant accents were well liked as friends, but found it difficult to be taken seriously in their job because their accent was distracting. Such colleagues were considered to be too playful for the high-powered jobs.

The second category is called the 'unpleasant accent' that included 'irritating' and 'annoying' as well as 'affected' and 'strained'. These accents carried more baggage than just their sound or their 'song'. They irritated people on the basis of the accent's political stigma and its nationalistic association. The interesting thing is that while some of the pleasant accents delighted people, their delight factor was less than half the converse reaction — meaning that those who were annoyed by certain accents were supremely annoyed to such a degree that their blood pressure seemed to rise and they spoke of a 'nauseating' effect. In audio experiments with news commentators of various 'unpleasant accents', listeners said that they could not tolerate the radio, and they had to switch it off. They were extremely agitated. It was not uncommon for members of the focus groups to fidget and turn in their chair, and to mouth-off the accent in mockery while pulling a face to express their displeasure.

The third category is the 'simpleton accent'. This is an unkind description given to accents that seem to indicate that the person is 'unintelligent' and 'not one of us'. The accent was projected by people for whom English was not their first language. For some, their vocabulary was limited and their pronunciation was imperfect. Regardless of their education level or their professional capability, these people were discriminated against based on a superficial aspect that inhibited them from being able to mix well with their peers.

We took this research one step further and decided to find out how a 'simpleton accent' can affect career advancement. We surveyed some of the leading organisations in the English-speaking world and found that fewer than half of one percent of senior managers had a 'simpleton accent' — meaning that those who exhibit this type of accent, no matter how bright they are, are not promoted into senior positions.

The lesson for you here is to consider what kind of effect your accent has on your colleagues. What would you sound like at an interview if you were applying for a job with a manager who does not know about your real capabilities, but might be distracted by your accent? I once knew a manager whose English was good, but whose accent was shocking. I convinced him to see a speech therapist. His public image eventually improved. I plucked up enough courage to advise him because he once drove me mad by telling me not to employ a man because his eyes were too close

together. He judged people based on their facial features (not an uncommon thing to do in his culture). I told him that if he held such beliefs, he should then understand that some people would not be comfortable with his accent. At least he had the maturity to take advice.

I have always tried to encourage clients to modify their accent or speech impediment. Some sport lazy speech that does not do their social standing any favours. If you can accept that 'learning the language' is important, then please accept that an accent is an important part of the communication process.

I met a young chap who was referred to me by one of my clients on the basis that he needed career guidance. I said to the young man, 'If I had to give you one piece of advice that would change the course of your life, it is that you should go and fix your speech impediment'. He did not know what I was talking about. All his life, no-one had been kind enough to tell him about his poor speech. All his family members had the impediment. I set up meetings for him with two speech therapists. Unfortunately, his father was not in favour of my recommendations, so he badgered his son into a state of inaction. Sometimes you just cannot help some people because they either cannot see or they cannot understand what you are talking about. The deadly combination is when they can neither see nor understand.

The next chapter lists seven *additional* aspects that can hold you back from advancing your career. **N**