

## 8. Workplace Warfare: What to Do When Someone Targets You



Enemies are different than people who play power moves.

Power moves can come from anyone, even from friends sometimes.

An enemy instead is an individual who has put you in their cross-hair. Either out of spite or because you stand in the way, they want to harm you.

They want to crush your reputation, destroy your social status, make your life difficult or see it as their life mission to have you fired.

This is not the time to see life as win-win or trying to see the positives in them. Win-win people routinely get steamrolled by the backstabbing enemies.

When it's time to play next level mind-fuckery, this is your lesson.

Here is how you can deal with enemies:

### **1. Keep Them Close**

You know The Godfather rule, don't you?

If you don't, here it is again:

*Keep your friends close, and your enemies even closer*

The reason why you want to keep them close are:

1. you give them less room to maneuver against you
2. you fuck with their heads
3. you show your mettle and resolve

This rule is true both physically and emotionally.

Take a meeting for example. The typical soft and fearful approach is to keep the distance and sit far away from your enemy. And that shows that you fear them.

The proactive, power move approach instead is to sit right near them.

This fucks with their head as they think "shit, he knows I'm out to get him and this guy still has the guts to come sit here as if nothing was going on".

It sends the message that you are more powerful and nastier than they could ever be, and chances are they will soon drop their game.

## **2. Compliment Them**

Next level power move.

While most would trade barbs, you want to compliment your enemy in public *just when they seek to undermine you*.

Without going overboard, but positive comments such as:

*You: I appreciate you care so much about this project*

*You: Thank you for weighing in, you have a lot of experience on this*

Why would you do this?

Because you want people to know that you are not the issue and the hatred doesn't come from you.

And when you will eventually maneuver against them it will also seem motivated by a real issue and not by personal rancor.

### **3. Thank Them For Their Criticism**

Don't push against them when they criticize you.

*Especially* if the criticism is well-founded or if they know what they are talking about because in that case you are responsible for 90% of your own demise.

It would be way too easy for them to make you look butthurt, selfish or overreactive.

Even if they don't say anything you will look so in front of others when you push back on criticism.

Don't "take it offline" either, because this is what they will say:

<https://youtu.be/TxVdhAJr1So>

Say instead something like this:

*You: Thank you man, I appreciate a candid feedback. I'm not sure on what to make with it right now, let me reflect on it and then we can speak further later*

Then keep going with whatever you were doing.  
Unless their criticism completely invalidates what you were saying or presenting, keep going or you give them too much power.

## **4. Keep The War For Yourself**

Don't go around talking to people about your issue.

You never know who's on which side or who is going to run their mouth.

Sure, you want allies. But you better let them come to you naturally. People don't like beggars and nobody likes war conscription.

I know, keeping everything for yourself is not easy, so you can maybe take your load off with someone outside of work.

And if you really must speak to someone at work, at least make 100% sure the person you speak to is a friend who keeps his mouth shut.

## **5. Be Aware Of Shifting Alliances**

If the war is over a managerial position expect that the alliances will shift on the side of who is winning -or who looks like is winning-.

Don't be saddened or angry about it, it's just the way it goes.

## **6. Keep Cool, Keep Uplifting**

Backstabbers and bullies feed on your overreactions.

You must do the opposite instead: stay positive and *show* people the differences in personality between you and them.

People will naturally support you when you uplift them.

## 7. Enter Their Territories

The inexperienced -and 99% of people actually- will stick with their friends and avoid their enemies' friends.

But as we mentioned in a previous lesson: avoid making more enemies than you need to!

**His friends and crew are not your enemies**, your enemy is the only enemy.

The top power mover will destabilize his enemy by walking into his turf, joking with his friends and get friendly reactions from them.

This will isolate him and drive him to the edge.

If you do it well, chances are that he will complain to his friends for being friendly with you, or at least he will act off and lose points with them.

If he is of the domineering type, he will also want to punish his friends, who now start disliking him and finally see him for the real sorry ass MF that he is.

Finally, walking into his turf and acting friendly with him while making friends with his crew is such a display of mental and social power that he will think twice before crossing you again.

### **Example: Making His Friends Your Friends**

Imagine you are Regina George in the movie Mean Girls, and your enemy is the emo girl.

The effect you want to have on your enemy's crew and on the people around is the effect Regina has on Lindsay Lohan. Lohan, like all other girls, *wants* to be with Regina George.

And that drives the emo wild:

<https://youtu.be/reg0lxc1Yl0>

You want to have the same effect.

You want people, including your enemies' crew, to *want* to be by your side.

And that comes back to the fundamentals of who you are: a cool cat with lots of power, who does a great job and who is good with people.

## **8. Shoot Them (Figuratively)**

The game can't go on forever.

If all of the above steps are not enough to make him desist, eventually, you gotta maneuver to get rid of them.

You want to stop the war in one of the following ways:

1. You isolate them so well they're powerless and stop bothering you
2. You beat them so badly they change department or quit
3. You move so far ahead they become a distant memory
4. You get the promotion and fire them

Of them all, I prefer and recommend you go for N.3.

They will likely forget you too by the way. As Taleb notes in “[Skin In The Game](#)”, people get jealous of people who are close to them. And that’s why the ultimate solution is always to move forward.

## Protecting From Future Enemies

If you feel that some up and coming guys are going to become enemies, do the following:

### **1. Teach Them Nothing**

They will try to learn as much as possible from you, but you share as little as possible.

It’s either you are their boss and gain from their good work, or why should you grow an enemy within the ranks?

If they join your calls, make sure you’re not showing your best tricks. If they want to join the important calls, say that you wish they could but you are going to talk about personal stuff with the customers and you want to keep it natural.

If they ask you to fix their coding say it’s quite good without giving details. Or fix it without explaining much because “you’re in a hurry”.

Seem superior, like you don’t have time for younger guns. You will come across a bit grumpy, but not cold and calculative.

### **2. Be Friendly While You Isolate Them**

Be friendly on the surface, but don’t introduce them to your network.

Don't criticize them openly with your friends but don't say anything good either.

If someone says something good about them, nod or add something inconsequential and move on.

If someone criticizes them, look as if you wished you could say more but don't want to because you'd rather not bash a teammate.

Basically, you want to hit them while at the same time looking like you're not.

### **3. Make Them Feel They're Doing Great**

The more people feel like they're doing great, the less extra effort they will put in.

Tell them that when you started you weren't half as good as they are, which will lead them to think that they will automatically get to your level without any extra effort.

Alternatively, make them feel so bad that they should change jobs.

What you want to avoid is the middle road where they're doing OK but they can do better.

### **4. Give Them Super Easy Or Super Difficult Tasks**

Research on peak performance shows that people improve the best when they're dealing with tasks right at the edge of their skills.



If you want to slow their development, give them super difficult tasks that they need to find someone else to do it or super easy ones where they learn nothing.

## **5. Focus On Yourself**

Finally, never forget the biggest truth: your main focus is always on yourself and your own improvement.

The best strategy is always this: be so good they can't touch you.