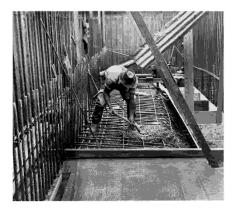# Oppressed Workers Handbook

Triangle Waist Worker Collective (TWWC)

TRIANGLE WAIST WORKER
COLLECTIVE

**OPPRESSED
WORKERS
HANDBOOK**

10-3-2020

Contents

Shift One: Introduction

Chapter 0: Who We Are

For most of our work lives, we acted out our opposing personalities. Inwardly, we are depressed, angry, and frustrated people throughout the day. Outwardly, we fumble along impersonating what we think our bosses want their happy and positive-minded laborers to be. We commiserate with the fellow hopeless souls known as our colleagues. But mostly, we do this alone and spend our exhausting and stressful days largely in ignorance. We are complete strangers to the world and ourselves. We are too much into ourselves and do not notice a similar plight in others.

But a small light of hope begins in us and others. Though coincidence or accident, we join digital and living spaces filled with fellow kindred beings. And once together, we begin talking and interacting with each other. We continue to find many others online, face to face, at demonstrations, and under many other circumstances. And continue to grow.

For security reasons, we have never been together as an entire group. Somewhere on our encrypted online channels, it was suggested that we become a very loose federation. And that is how the Triangle Waist Worker Collective (TWWC) was born. We ensure consciously that one or two persons do not oversee things. A need arises and people just step up. If any assholes join and try to cause unrest, they are quickly tossed aside.

[Note: We named ourselves after the famous tragedy of 1911. 146 workers tragically died in a skyscraper fire. Over 60 middle-aged or young women and men jumped to their death. Why? Because their management blocked purposely all the fire exits. Heaven forbid a worker left early, took an 'unauthorized' break, or stole a 'valuable' shirtwaist. One foreman looked out for himself and escaped after using a key to open another stair entrance. We can't think of a better example of management short-sightedness and arrogance. Their example encourages us each day to do better for our fellow workers. See en.wikipedia.org for the terrible details. Note that two years before there had been a strike against the company. See www.zinnedproject.org/]

In our day jobs, we are a large group of experienced workers in many professions mostly in North America. We can be found in Human Resources, IT, Services, Support, Security, Legal, Engineering, etc. Each of us performs our job and watches silently from the sidelines. It is often painful to do so. Especially after seeing administration after administration fail to make any impactful change and work their employees harder each time. It is time to break through the lies, tactics, and myths that management has been using to maintain their power.

In our free time, we discreetly sought out like-minded beings in similar situations. We studied and discussed on our own and collectively why things are set up the way that they are. And review past and current theories on organizational control and worker exploitation.

This book is the result of our research and key discussions. We hope that it will make a big difference in your lives. Once in their lifetime, a human should do something that scares the shit out of them. This work is that act or us. Maybe sometime we might reach out to you directly. Or never will. If you don't like this guide, then write your own. We dare you. Cheers.

The links provided are working at the time of this release. There will not be a future edition with updates.

Chapter 1: Book Organization

We spent a good deal of time thinking about what we needed to say and how we wanted to organize this book. Even so, events in our workday suggested many worthy additions. So even though we tried to plan the book's contents, at times, it just grew organically.

We named each section Shift (such as a work shift) to keep with the overall theme. It includes some overall commentary on the section as well.

At the start, we had a simple framework. Just write it like an underground company employee manual. The one that you are secretly given on day one to counter the officious nonsense covered in the authorized employee guide. This is the unauthorized manual that tells you the secret of surviving and thriving at your new company. It is written mostly in the second person as if someone is talking to you directly.

But as we discussed this budding work, we felt that it was important to add a section on the emotions and mental states that you may encounter on any given workday. After all, your emotional and psychological health are both keys to your longevity and work career.

Later, we included three other sections. One dealing with the various forms of oppression deployed through daily work practices. A second on various attitudes and actions you can do about work. The other on what passes today as managing employee activity.

In summary, this is how we see and experience the work world. We are not historians so we may have oversimplified our explanations and missed some points. But some context is needed to explain how we got here. Your mileage may vary in your own work life.

Since we had many writers (but one editor), you may experience some choice curse words throughout this work. We kept it to only where we thought that it made sense. Some contributors may sound like they want extreme action. But that is clearly not the case for nearly all of us. We felt that it was important to include all sides of the worker spectrum.

Finally, we added some references for further reading throughout this work. We do not always agree with these authors. But their thoughts make great discussion kickoffs.

Shift Two: Welcome to the Company.

Chapter 2: Collective Section Comments

We found it interesting how many artifacts such as employee handbooks are hard to find online or companies have no interest in keeping such mementos of their past. (Especially with the constant focus on the present and future.) This is a short section that leads us to the current employee hiring at-will mindset.

Chapter 3: Historical Employee Manuals

Look around you. What you see is a world built by the mind and sweat of slaves and everyday laborers. And from early on, the success of businesses and the best efforts of employees were tied closely together. For businesses employed workers to explore and exploit this world, operate their emerging factories, and create new technologies for further overuse of this planet. Many of these firms were run by family members for generations. This kept the company profits being passed down across eras. In time, new management and strategic professionals arose. These were managers and strategic/organizational planners and management. Organizational management became a science to be both studied, measured, deployed, and improved.

As complexity arose in the workplace and employees began receiving meaningful benefits, employee manuals were published. They contained much of the following:

- Welcome from management stressing that you are part of an organization doing crucial work.

- A history of the company.

- A facility map.

- A summary of company products.

- A company organizational chart and photos of management. These rarely changed over time.

- A handbook purpose. It covered what is expected of you and provides a few government rules.

- The company and government policies/procedures.

- Work rules and expected work behavior.

-The employee benefits.

A review of these manuals makes it sound that your employment and the company were on solid ground and go on for virtually forever. And for the most part, that would be right.

But companies that had lifetime employment had to deal with making a profit. And they made a shift to at-will employment. And the reoccurring rounds of mass layoffs starting in the 1970s and yet to cease.

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Wikipedia. 2020. "Employee Handbook." Wikipedia. en.wikipedia.org.

Chapter 4: Current Employee Manuals

As you can see from the previous chapter, employee manuals were simple, bland texts almost to the point of boredom. And up to the 1970s, they made it sound as if your employment and the company were on solid ground and go on for virtually forever. And for the most part, that was correct.

But companies that had lifetime employment had to deal with the increasingly difficult task of making a profit. As a result, they made a hard shift to at-will employment. And began instituting reoccurring rounds of mass layoffs starting in the 1970s.

That resulted in a whole new side industry just to deal with layoffs. Company planners that "improved" the company's efficiency by determining the correct layoff scenario among many to follow. HR staff to create severance packages. Trainers to help with reskilling or employment search. Psychological help with the inner demons for those let go. And a lengthy confidentiality agreement that you had to sign before getting all of these benefits.

What is in the far bulkier employee handbook of today?

- A mission/vision statement rather than company history. It is probably not read or followed.

- A summary of the emerging area of company culture including focus, values, and work environment. Company culture will have a direct impact on the desired conduct.

- A longer list of expected employee behavior. The list is generally far less permissive than it was in the past. And whatever you do, don't sully the good name of your company or damage its brand/intellectual property. Whether on the company or personal time.

- A section prominently mentioning the at-will employment.

- Pages upon pages of government and company policies.

- A small list of employee benefits that can go away at any time.

- May include using company software and has bright colors/happy employee pictures.

And even though this is all documented. You would think with everything so clearly covered, employees would be contented. But many are not.

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Wikipedia. 2020. "Employee Handbook." Wikipedia. en.wikipedia.org.

Chapter 5: Orientation

Welcome to your new company. You went through multiple interviews, psychological and drug tests, rigorous security checks, received your badge, have lots of references to read, and much more. Now the real workday begins.

In the past, new employees were required to go to employee orientation. Once there, you would sit for five days or so, listen to hard-gained wisdom from different parties, and then start work. Now, most of it can be done digitally or you just read through an oversized employee handbook. THEN you can get started. Or you have to read it somehow during your long workday. You probably can't wait to start and are bubbling over with enthusiasm.

But before diving into the pool of overwork, keep your eyes open. Because whatever you learn at this time is likely wrong. The words that you are hearing are probable lies. All you have been exposed to so far is the official, company-friendly look at things. They are putting things with their best face forward. Watch for the cracks and contradictions in the company. They are not too hard to find.

Instead, observe who knows how things REALLY work and make friends with them. They will tell you about the few key documents that you must know about. They may share with you aged post-it notes tacked to their desk walls. Along with contacts and the real way of doing things. Knowing about this informal "handbook" is the real key to success

A manager may meet with you and then say something that sounds nonsensical like it is all about finding the restroom or retreating to your own hidden dolphin cove. What they are trying to say mysteriously is that you have to find your way to succeed in the company and learn how to truly get things done.

Or you can seek out the "hidden rebels" scattered throughout the company. And they will give you their own take on surviving.

Shift Three: Things That Employees Endure

Chapter 6: Collective Section Comments

This is the longest section since management has so many activities and techniques in their arsenal that they can employ to keep their workers busy, worried, going crazy, be under their control, etc. This could be a book in its own right. We continue two sections later on how managers attempt to "manage". Some chapters could go into either section.

Chapter 7: Bastard Bosses from Our Past.

This chapter will NOT go into detail about every manager type and horror story we've heard. We are more interested in giving an overall tutorial on what you may encounter during your work career.

Your first day at your new job is always the most revealing. Some possible warning signs:

- Your boss is on vacation/in all-day meetings and you have to figure your way around. Moreover, they left you with no greeting or task list.

- Your assigned desk is a former department dumping ground or has the items from your long-gone predecessor. It is assumed that you will clean this up as soon as possible.

- You are assigned immediately to attending twelve hours of meetings when you are only being paid for eight. And they never told you about that during the interview.

- You hear a lot of complaints from your colleagues. Or they are talking with great anticipation about the weekend/next vacation.

- There is a tall pile of papers or emails to go through with a long set of work assignments. Aggressive deadlines are also given to each of them.

But it is a typical first day, you should meet your new boss and team. Your teammates will give a harmless greeting and a likely wisecrack. You are taken your cubicle and briefly unpack. From there onwards, the newness slowly begins to lose its flavor.

Between all of us in the Collective, we had hundreds maybe thousands of bosses. Most were changed in less than a year. Organizations keep changing staff responsibilities as a way to justify their existence. Most were a decent bunch of managers. But there were those noticeable exceptions that made life for their employees to be hell on earth. Space does not allow us to chronicle all the evildoers from our working past.

In fairness, we tried to "reverse mentor" some of them. But that rarely worked since they "knew far more" than we did.

Bosses are rarely your friends. They don't have the time or inclination typically to care about your career. What they do care about is dictated to them by their managers and their managers above them. To those employee-friendly career-caring bosses, we say bravo to this rare breed. We hope that you mentor others to become the same.

Bosses come in all shapes and sizes. From those that are clueless and leave you alone. This vacuum leads to good personal leadership opportunities. To those that try to manage. And those that must not be mentioned.

The biggest liars are not politicians or spouses. It is our bosses trying to appease THEIR bosses above them and try squeezing every ounce of productivity from their subordinates under them

(us). As long as the numbers look good, lies are justified. And the odds of our bosses getting caught are near zero.

Many are just as lost as their staff in trying to implement the ever-changing whims of upper management. They are just passing their confusion down the line.

The worst are those into mind games where they humiliate, fume at, or otherwise attack others. They are pure demons to work for. It is often a power trip for them.

Almost as bad are those that micromanage. And always in your face. A key coping mechanism is to do whatever will get them away even temporarily. And find good places to hide. But slowly, find ways to rebel and undermine the structure. Sometimes that involves stressing it to its logical contradiction. Other moments it just means breaking or sabotaging a small piece occasionally.

You may become lucky by "ganging up" and getting the really bad manager removed. It may help. But there is always a possibility that a worse one will follow.

Best of luck!

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Chapter 8: Mess in Aisle 3 (Real Crises)

Today's company organizations are incredibly fragile and constantly strained. And why not given the constant shifts in organization management, the ongoing series of involuntary/voluntary layoffs, and workers overtaxed with work given the constant drop in resources. The worker is just a reactive puppet being pulled by strings, not of their own choosing.

So, if you wish to see a company's true colors, watch how they deal with a temporary crisis such as a mess in aisle 3 (or any other situation). Is it ignored or dealt with swiftly? Or are there heated discussions between employee and management before acting? Maybe you were the one that created the crisis or it was done by another innocently. Doesn't matter. Things happen.

In your own company, just wait for a situation to come. (And it will come – guaranteed.)

At that time, you will see what your managers are worth. Do they panic or even worse hide in a strategic location elsewhere? Do they superficially try to solve the issue? Or implement both a short- and long-term fix? Because a crisis is a learning opportunity and you should treat it as such. But many managers see it as something to resolve quickly to get it off their plate. And then move on.

See the link below for the field of Crisis Management and how companies deal with all sorts of real emergencies.

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Wikipedia. n.d. "Crisis Management." Wikipedia. en.wikipedia.org.

Chapter 9: Busywork

Due to legal/company requirements, management whims (possibly up several levels), or some other reason, managers will assign "busy work" quite frequently. It could be complying with a new procedure which means extra steps, more training, or inputting data into a spreadsheet/application. The funny thing is that this is a checklist item for your management. They likely will never look at/care about it. Just another thing to get off their plate and place it on yours. And the cycle keeps repeating as this is to be expected. And no one realizes that this is demoralizing, unproductive, and contributes nothing to the company's profits.

Companies also want you to market their goods and company with family and friends. Your day as an employee never ends.

There are several ways to deal with it.

- No compliance.

- Ignore it./Say and do nothing at all.

- Say that you did it/will do it. But never do it.

- Partial compliance

- Do part of it/do it badly.

- Full compliance.

What you will do depends on what you can get away with, penalties for non-compliance, and personality/workload.

We found many references for busywork. None appeared to be from the employee perspective. Only two are included.

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Chapter 10: False Crises

News Flash! Nearly all companies stopped doing any real planning years ago. Gone are the twenty, ten, five, and one-year plans. Consequently, your corporate world became a reactive mess buried in one urgent email flurry after another. There is always something that you only have a few days to do. And that is on top of your already busy work schedule. You are expected to suck it up and get it done. Rinse and repeat because this cycle repeats so many times at your company that you do not even question it.

In the last chapter, we talked about varying levels of compliance. That would apply here as well.

And what are the useless tasks that you must get done? The list always changes. A spreadsheet to complete. More training to take. Some software to install. Getting a corporate charge card. And a thousand other nonsensical items.

Worse is that this is coupled usually with some penalty (such as lost wages or bonuses) if you fail to comply. So as companies often do, they treat you like sheep expected to get into the right pen. And in some dark corner of your corporate world, a no-named, numbers-driven soulless employee is tracking your compliance numbers. We can imagine their mindless day — "Tompkins – Check, Lewiston – Check. Windmere – Non-compliant. They were on vacation at that time? Too bad. They should be watching emails on their corporate phone, tablet, or whatnot. They will have a pay cut starting next week."

At the end of the day, it is another checklist item to complete. That no one really cares about. And it will be forgotten soon to be replaced by the next required emergency item. Or more busywork.

We want to be there that fateful day when someone says at your company "Enough" and the foundation of false suppositions begins to crumble. It will be fucking glorious.

Chapter 11: Bosses Like Spreadsheets

There was a time not too long ago that spreadsheets were done on paper and checked studiously by hand. (As well as documents.) No more. Electronic spreadsheet software is plentiful and free. And managers found it an incredibly useful way to monitor their own and their employees' work lives. And they can keep it in one spreadsheet with multiple tabs for each work activity. This is accompanied by filtering and pivot tables to manipulate the data in any which way that is needed. They can also place it online for all to see and edit.

So, all is good. Because your manager feels in total control. Now that they have their overloaded "database" tracking your phone number, preferences, employee ratings, and who knows what else. Even better, they can now share with other managers. Whether by email, file sharing systems, or online.

What is the result? You are not a person anymore. Just a few cells in a spreadsheet where you get compared to other cells formerly viewed as persons. This is "scientific management" on steroids.

"Management by Spreadsheet" is a well-known phenomenon. There have been Dilbert cartoons on it since 2011.

But all is not lost. It just means that you have to fight back harder. Start building a parallel structure at your own company with your own "database." What information should you be really gathering? What activities and metrics make sense to monitor? The corporate world hates when someone takes on their bullshit and falsehoods. Your managers will feel shamed, threatened, challenged, and clueless. That is a sure sign that you are making some headway however briefly.

But also learn what your fellow employees are doing at other companies. Start discussions. You are not alone!

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Chapter 12: Vacation/Holiday

It is summer again, so no doubt that you are thinking about how many days until you get the family and depositing yourself at some location to get away. (Pandemic permitting.) But before heading to the freeway/airport, you may want to review how vacations began in the first place. What follows is a very simplified look at vacation's evolution. Some appropriate links with more details are provided below.

It was not always so rosy. In the age of the industrial revolution and the "mill girls," you had one day off a week after a 70–80+ hour workweek. You might get a month or two to return home.

Thorstein Veblen documented the idea of conspicuous leisure in the 1880s. That is the American business/ruling class flaunting their wealth by just lying about in exotic and exclusive resort locations. All motivated by the desire to feel superior over those 'poor" workers and good about themselves.

Meantime workers were fighting hard to keep their jobs, work fewer hours (8–9 hour day), and get a modest salary increase. There were various bloody and prolonged strikes for this happen.

What a stark difference. On one hand, you had a growing wealthy class taking extensive time away at expensive locations. And on the other side, their workers are making below subsistence levels.

In time, workers on both sides of the continent got holidays (Europe) or vacation (US). In the latter, this was based on seniority and you could get a month or so.

After the first World War, employees in Europe increasingly asked for holidays. Management saw this was a great way to build employee longevity and could coordinate during slow times. From there, it was built to a cultural norm where everyone got away during the summer. However, there was always a lingering fear by some management on what workers might learn while away.

Europe realized a rested worker even with less pay is a happier worker. And so, it is to the present day. They take generally less sick time, spend more quality moments to bond with families over some great memories, and feel more supportive of their company.

In time, American workers got their hours and associated benefits. And part of that included vacations. Once the interstate system was built, motels and tourist attractions were constructed as well. Those precious few weeks away are now distant memories and faded photographs.

With economic cycles resulting in constant layoffs, American employees got the meta-message to work as much as possible or be let go shortly. Since then, the US worker had a much bleaker fate. Although they had a lot of vacation on the books, they end up not taking a lot of it to keep the company running. Employees were looked down upon if they take time off. Meantime, their management seemed not to have that same problem and are encouraged to rest their "precious" brains as much as possible. What a sad fate.

Sadly, managers will rarely look out if an employee is taking too little vacation. Only the opposite case. Your time away is an inconvenience for them since they have to reschedule things and reshuffle resources.

Fuck them. Your ancestors risked their lives for the now ignored 40-hour workweek. It is YOUR time away. Do not be the snook that leaves unused vacation on the board. Your company is laughing at you behind your back if you do. Laugh back at them instead and make them sweat.

And when you take off, truly get away. Leave the company correspondence unread and electronics behind. Experience true freedom.

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Chapter 13: Drowning

You wake up in a cold sweat after having a bad stress dream. Then you need to get dressed and go into work where the real drowning begins. And when sitting in your seat, you are visually and mentally assaulted for the rest of the day. So many emails to read, papers in your physical mailbox. Time to do what you can in a never-ending exercise that you cannot win. Welcome to corporate America. And there are four workdays to go.

The corporate world is busily watching its own "progress" and looking at the metrics. And ignoring purposely employee health. It fails to ask you and every employee in your company how they are doing. How are you REALLY doing? Because if they did, they would be talking with workers drowning with overwork and constantly rebalancing things in an unstable and everchanging environment. This corporate world gives you inadequate rest time be it a short vacation or any recovery time. It ignores your fate until it is too late when you go crazy, leave, die of poor health, or take your own life. It keeps breaking you down systematically with their clinical impersonal approach. Finally, they throw you out on the street when no longer deemed useful. Not much different than what happened to the hard-working horse Boxer in Animal Farm who made his final contributions with his life at a nearby glue factory. And that fate was lied about to his fellow co-workers.

A parallel structure of employees is needed for sanity checking, mutual support, or just spending time with others. It could be a clandestine employee board. Even time with a stress pet or a meditation/yoga mat would be handy.

Employees should discretely seek out/find such groups if they are unable to find them. They should read some of the references in this book to see the bigger system.

Five takeaways

- You are not alone. Others are undergoing the same thing.

- It's not you, it's the system.

- You are more than your title, work situation, or metrics. You are not just a role.

- Find others to commiserate and conspire with.

- Learn about the bigger picture. This has been written about for some time.

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Chapter 14: Everyone is Working through the Weekend.

Sometime back, there was a song by Loverboy on how everybody was working for the weekend. But the TV show Selfie had a bit where one person thought that it was everybody was working *through the weekend.* Since it was their most productive time. That is not far from the truth.

With our "free" work phones and laptops in our homes, the home/work boundary is beyond blurry. We are always available for a call or checking email "just in case." And our personal lives are put on hold.

For some, it is even worse. We internalized our disapproving bosses in our heads. "Oh Townbee, I am so disappointed that you are not harder or even doing even more. You know that that employee internal reviews are coming up soon on those that we are letting go. Would so hate to see you on that list." So you dig in and work even harder.

There will always be project deadlines, needed work that "MUST" get done. Time to say "Fuck NO" and get a life. If your boss is not going to work on a glorious Sunday, why should you?

Two variations on this exist:

The first is that we must be on customer calls during weekends because that is when our customers work. And we need to show them that we are responsive to their needs. Else we will lose them to our competitor. Since the customer works during the weekend, don't expect a break. To us, that seems like a good sign to start looking for another company. Instead of one that expects you to work fourteen hours a day and pay for eight.

The second is the one where a person has three low paying jobs and works through the weekend because they need the money and have limited choices. Maybe a universal basic income will help. Or tuition-free education. We hope that our local businesses and schools look deeper into this issue.

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Zeitlin, Mindy. 2020. "Here's What You Absolutely Must Do This Weekend If You Want a Better Week Next Week." Inc. January 10. www.inc.com

Chapter 15: Identity Politics at Work.

We cannot choose the life circumstances, name, social class, finances, etc. that we are born with. Part of the growth process is forging a new identity based on the parameters of our choosing, not the ones that we are given.

But in some organizations, that doesn't make a damn bit of difference. For them, one size fits all. So those whose self-worth is based on existing or new identities will have likely a difficult time in an organization that devalues the individual and individual differences. One team. One performance. No individuals.

For them, people might as well as boxes instead of people working for them. These misguided managers want to lower the performance of the highest performers (called outliers like they are a statistic) and raise that of the lowest performers.

This is especially hard on women, minorities, and other groups. In Japan, for example, there has been social pressure not to wear eyeglasses, to wear high heels, and drink with their male co-workers.

Perhaps it is time for you to fight back and let the fuckers know who is working for them. An individual and not a statistical data point.

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Chapter 16: Old Age, Illness, and Death

The Buddha talked about how life is highlighted by old age, sickness, and death. As a young prince, he was excluded from seeing these three signs. Eventually, he did see them. He was so struck that he wanted to find a way out to relieve all beings. That was the fourth sign of being a monk as a pathway to our liberation.

An oppressed worker is like a car running with an overheated engine all the time. There is no such path to freedom for them. Their cubicle drawers may be filled with coffee and tea, pills to deal with headaches, keeping them awake, or give them energy. Whatever it takes to suck it up and make it through another day. Even accepting abuse from annoying personalities. Just one more day rather than dealing with overall health implications. Is that you as well?

This is the hidden price of work, Besides being dehumanized, the boss turns a blind eye to the mental and physical abuse that the poor employee subjects themselves willingly to each day.

In time, they may pass away prematurely. In Japan, there is a word and sorry phenomenon called Karoshi. It also exists in China and South Korea. Blind sacrifice that is ignored by management as long as goals are met.

Miwa Sado was only 31 years old after died after far too many hours of overtime including weekends. You can find out more about this avoidable tragedy at www.insider.com.

To counter, do not take this shit so seriously. Steal the company's internet and listen to some self-empowering music. Take a walk at lunch in nature to reset. And keep your mind, body. spirit, and the shadows in balance and healthy.

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Chapter 17: Retirement

In the days of permanent retirement, you could count the days until you would leave. Then there was a retirement party, some sort of kind words, a card signed by your colleagues, and parting gift. Then, you would head off to obscurity living off your decent pension.

Fast forward to current times. If you miraculously survived the numerous and continuous layoffs, one day you stumble into retirement. It may be at a mandatory age or one of your choosing. By then you are likely tired, old, and your spirit broken into a million smaller parts. There is no pension. It was up to you to save (perhaps with the aid of some company matching funds). And good luck with health care in your declining years.

And yet, your company likely has another standard for former managers. With deferred compensation, executive retirement plans, deferred stocks, healthcare, etc., they can live comfortably.

Why can't the company do that for you today? Because it is an expense and companies try to minimize that. Because once retired, you are the past. And for self-preservation, many companies try to forget about the past and their history. They no longer honor employees that helped them along the way. And only dwell now on profits and sustaining the enterprise. We are sorry that you are the victim of this hollow joke.

Chapter 18: Lunchtime

Ah, it is time for lunch. But it wasn't always so. But with the long work hours of the industrial age, workers needed time to briefly eat and group for the afternoon/evening hours. In time, a food industry open for purchase during this time took off.

In different countries, work lunches may allow time to return home, briefly reengage with family, and have a full meal. Then return recharged.

In the United States during the past, some businessmen would have a three-martini lunch where they drank and unloaded their woes. The worker equivalent was the occasional department lunch (which was split evenly or the boss picked up the tab as a department expense). Or the longer Friday lunch followed by leaving early. (Where more hours are put in throughout the week to permit the time away.)

Some technology companies had catered lunches or cafeteria with quality chefs. Others just subsidized lunches in a cafeteria or had a store to buy sandwiches.

But times have changed. Departments rarely buy up employee lunches. Lunch is probably more like fifteen or twenty minutes than a full hour. Subsidized company cafeterias have been long shuttered. Catered lunches have been stopped at many locations. Only to be replaced by vending machines filled with expired snacks. The poor workers eat at their desks far away from the windows perhaps while engaging with a computer screen. And then they "go back" reluctantly with no real separation/decompression time. Or to paraphrase one singer, not even knowing the time of day. It is disheartening not an inspiring practice. Workers of the world, you are entitled to a leisurely lunch break. Use it!

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Chapter 19: Employee Surveys

Some managers live inside a grand illusion. They think that they are doing right by their employees and are beloved by them. To verify this "obvious truth," they conduct employee surveys. It may be quarterly, annually, or semi-annually. The survey may be conducted in house or with a third-party company.

These are typically done to see if employees are engaged, content, and to assess the overall organizational health. Some manager's salaries are based on these numbers. So it can be used as a feedback mechanism or yet another means of social control.

Many of these surveys are anonymous to get more honest results. But some employers insist that they must know who you are. That is a two-edged sword. They will know if you completed the survey or not. In this case, results are timider and less honest.

What is most interesting are two things. The first are the questions and topics covered. Superficial questions lead to superficial results. Good surveys are across multiple areas. The other area is there a space to add employee comments. And if there is such an area, do they allow the employee to enter a few words, paragraphs, or pages? This is a good gauge if a company really wants to hear what is on the employee's mind.

What is most revealing is how employers react to seeing the results. Will your managers focus on the positive or dwell on the negative? Are they threatened by the results or use it as an opportunity to learn and improve? The answer can determine your personal and company health.

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Chapter 20: Employee Romance

[We are not going to talk about employee-management or any relationship where power, abuse, and hierarchy are all involved. That is out of scope and well-covered elsewhere. We do provide one link below on such a relationship gone very wrong. We are only discussing relationships between peers.]

Being in such a tight area on an everyday basis also leads to personal distractions. And that may blossom into an out of office relationship. And depending on whether it is in the same department, division, etc, this could be against company policy.

Companies are worried about poisoning already fragile relationships in a department or organization. So they set rules to control behavior. And what is your typical option then? One of the parties has to leave the company. Because careers and relationships cannot fit nicely together in a company box.

The articles below talk about telling your manager first and then others once you are in a relationship. We had a lot of discussion on that. And it comes down to your choice if and when to tell. If you do tell, consider saying as little as possible. Some people need something else to judge or gossip about. Fuck them. Don't do anything to ruin your precious relationship. And if it breaks up, at least there were some moments of mutual enjoyment.

One link below talks about how companies are focusing more on sexual harassment, conflict of interest, and discrimination rather than office romance. And that is a good thing. But companies will always have that final say on what is an accepted and legitimate office romance. And that is a real concern.

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Chapter 21: Turf Wars

Even with a lean staff, endless warring and restless warriors can still be found within and across organizations. Their fiefdoms are their sole focus. "How can I maintain my power base? How can I grow into a larger organization? Their role and the organization(s) are fused indistinguishably together.

Often, the hapless worker is caught in the middle and their situation gets aggravated under certain situations:

- Overlapping organizations/roles are consolidated. For example, maybe each division has its own legal department. Then they are centralized. Will your VP/director type survive? And if they do, will they keep your groups(s) intact? Or once together, will a different form of turf wars begin? Their role in your organization and connections may be key to your survival on the reorganization seas.

-Dissimilar Organizations merge. Everyone is nervous with no overlap and are trying to find their own way to survive. Maybe it will be the ones that speak the loudest that survive. Or the best connected. Or the best perceived. It will be a messy shakeout regardless.

So we have links below on how turf wars start and how to avoid/eliminate them. But this is mostly from a company or team perspective. What can you, the individual do?

- You can choose sides after observing.

- You can maintain/develop skills to keep you valued.

- You can look elsewhere within or outside the company.

- Try to get some early successes in the new organization and show your value. Note that everyone else is trying to do this. Build your own project if you can.

- Rebuild/expand your internal and external personal network.

- Build your own parallel informal stealth structure. In the resulting chaos, this could be possible. Private social networks may aid this effort.

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Ryan, Liz. 2016. "How to Win an Office Turf War." Forbes. May 24. www.forbes.com.

Chapter 22: The Social Cost

One aspect that American companies ignore usually is the social costs of business on their workers. Of course, they talk about work/job balance as if it achievable easily. But they never/rarely talk about social costs. When looking for articles, we found many on social costs and unemployed workers. That is a real concern.

But what about social costs and EMPLOYED workers? We found only one decent reference. Because of the job, workers miss out on the simple joys of watching their families and friends grow up or grow older. All the unsaid conversations and hours lost of just spending time together. The missed bonding and moments of untaken vacations.

This can impact your job, because you may become angry, bitter, and always feel that you are a member of the association of perpetual victims. Don't accept that role. Don't believe that you are THAT invaluable to the company. To them, you are and always will be an expendable resource. They don't care if you work that extra hour(s) or not. Maybe you need to work part-time or seek a more employee-friendly job. Stay grounded with your family and friends. Tell them you love/care/cherish them now before it's too late.

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Wikipedia. n.d. "Social Cost." Wikipedia. en.wikipedia.org.

Shift Four: What Am I feeling today?

Chapter 23: Collective Section Comments

This section may be the most important to you. For you are living in a long tunnel, a bardo between the present and where you are heading. You feel alone and been betrayed a thousand times over. You feel hopeless and one day is no different than another. You are caught in a sand trap only partially of your choosing.

There are four general ways to deal with it. You can find self-help books on each of these. Some of you may see an abbreviated form or variation of Buddha's Four Noble Truths and Saint John of the Cross's *Dark Night of the Soul* below.

Step 1: Recognize the shit you are in and is unfolding.

We have so much shit thrown at us that we get lost and identify with it. But we get a little opening when we realize – I am in a mess and I want to get out. I get angry, sad, frustrated, or a heck of a lot of other emotions. But if you blink, they pass quickly on.

Step 2: We do not have to identify with the shit that we are in.

This is not our only choice. Imagine if we were truly more satisfied and truly embrace the world rather than be brought under by it. How much time would we have and have much more joy would we experience? We don't have to play that game anymore.

Step 3: Release the identification with the shit that we are in.

It takes so much energy to hold on to our emotions with dear life. It takes far less to let go and keep letting go. This is the choice for our very own survival. Building up the confidence and overcoming the existence is what it takes all the time before we actually let it go. And if we did it right, then we move it on.

Step 4: Move on and enjoy life.

From here on, it is truly a blank page. We no longer need to be the reactive clown the work world requires of us. We can have other behaviors and tactics. We will revisit in the next section

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Chapter 24: Depression

Being depressed or living with a depressed person is not easy. Finding energy and the will to live becomes difficult. This challenge becomes even more enormous while fighting against the full weight of the corporate organization. A company truly doesn't give a damn if you live or die. As long as while you are living, you help contribute to their profits.

Under these tiring circumstances, it is damn easy to feel despair or thousands of other emotions. Don't give in to the lies and bullshit. Every day, fight back in some way no matter how small.

We love the ones that listen to punk, the Coup, or a million other songs of resistance while "happily" doing their work.

We love the ones that keep asking challenging questions when they are not supposed to.

We love the ones that create havoc no matter how small.

We love the ones that try to reframe their work life and career.

We love those that try to instill in others the desire to question and resist.

The "little way of resistance" keeps one fresh and engaged. And sucks the life out of depression. If you need medical treatment, then actively seek it out early.

Chapter 25: Nihilism/Anger

The book *Blessed is the Flame* talks about a viewpoint that we are fucked beyond all belief because the infrastructure and powers behind our lives cannot be fixed. So the best thing to do is fighting back with constant anger and resistance.

It talks about even though people were in concentration camps, they still fought back. They were going to die anyway. So at least destroy the prison, guards, etc. in some small but futile way.

A being in corporate life has a bleak future as well. They also are fucked in an irreparable environment. But being angry will get you nowhere. And managers hate dealing with employee emotions. They will label you high maintenance, hard to work with, not a team player, and a hundred other unwelcoming terms, Even though it is a natural reaction to a life of overwork. So, what will you do, accept, change/resist, or walk away? Remember that neither you nor Ned Ludd were alone with your feelings and thoughts of being exploited. They are other folks to fight or just simply commiserate with.

References

Serafinski. 2016. "Blessed Is the Flame." the Anarchist Library. theanarchistlibrary.org.

Chapter 26: Fatigue/Sleep

Your work time does impact your sacred pillow time. The lack of vacation, longer hours, indifferent managers, asshole coworkers, and more stress means a tired, overcaffeinated worker that can barely make it through the workday. You become not quite human or animal. Just a reactive mess that is not enjoying life at all. And it passes by so quickly.

Sleep is one of the foundational basics to succeed in either your home or work life. We provided just a few of the many links on work implications and how to get more quality sleep. Pleasant dreams!

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Chapter 27: Being Resigned to the Job.

The meaningless of your job has robbed you of all your joy. You show up with a heavy sigh and get the minimum done to keep your job. If a person comes up to you and says "Good Morning" and smiles at you, then you want quickly escape and not return in kind. There is so much heavy weight around you, that people avoid you like the plague.

Don't let the daily grind rob you of your joy. Let the music within you find an outlet. Nearly all work situations are far from hopeless. There are personal/work skills to learn, new people to meet, and different offices to visit. Find someone to talk it through. And from such conversations, insights may come. And rays of light will begin to pierce the gloom.

Shift Five: How do I Behave?

Chapter 28: Collective Section Comments

We reached the section on daily behavior in regards to work. The whole range is simplistically covered here. A few sections later we go into strategy and tactics.

Your behavior depends on

- Do you need a steady income or are independently wealthy?

- Do you feel that your life serves no or some purpose?

- Do you want to deliver a confrontational message however brief?

- Do you want to make some changes, no matter how small?

Chapter 29: No Work at All/Underemployed

The Bob Black reference at the end talks about why work at all. Usually, the answer is "I need to do this to survive."

At one end are "Not in Education, Employment, or Training" or NEET. And NLFET stands for "neither in the labor force nor in education or training". Various movies have shown NEETs in dirty, overfilled rooms playing on computers and being surly.

After a while, they either take very temporary or do part-time jobs. But still very underemployed. Then get perhaps enough money until can quit enjoying the feast. But a famine period will come shortly enough.

There are a series of jobs that one can that are more permanent but involve fewer hours.

We are mentioning this for completeness only.

Get the fuck out of the house and do something with your lives, no matter how small.

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Chapter 30: Compliance

The majority of workers in your organization just want to keep their job by any acceptable means necessary. Maybe for others, it is fear that drives them to the same result. So they try to stay quiet or be practically invisible. They also likely won't do anything else to help others else they would stick out.

Companies rely heavily on the hard labor and sweat off the backs of compliant workers. It gets translated into stock earnings, revenues, and profits. All is good, right?

One day you may wake up full of regrets as you watch you or your colleagues be let go. Then you will release playing it safe was worth shit. The company had your number all along and could have called it at any time.

Wake up before its too late and stop being that happy little compliant slave. Question, challenge, offer alternatives to show your TRUE value.

Chapter 31: More Weight

As far as we know, only one person died of pressing in these United States. (An increasing load of rocks against their naked frame.) This was Giles Corey, accused falsely of witchcraft during the Salem witch trials. He was around eighty at the time. He refused to say if he was innocent or guilty. Therefore, he could not go to trial. Hence the pressing. And every time he was asked, he just said more weight. But by doing so, he was able to pass his farm down to his family. Later he was absolved of his "crime".

"More weight" can also be an act of defiance of work. It could mean more work, less vacation as a protest. Or more punishment. The management may keep giving more. But in time, they may question your motives and theirs. Or just continue to exploit what they see as a willing victim.

Some have compared it to nonviolence to allow themselves to be willingly beat up. But, it is only superficially the same. One is allowing themselves to be a victim using the tools of the work system only as a means of education and fighting exploitation. The other is allowing law enforcement and the government to attack them senseless.

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Chapter 32: Change Agent

You can wait to be run over by your company leading their own version of change. Or take the reigns and lead the company to real change. To do so, you need the following:

- Figure out what you are going to change. It may be everything. It may be something screaming at you that sorely needs attention. It may be someone tells you about and you embrace it as your own. Or you just one day see someone's agony and worn out long-suffering face.

- Find a sponsor(s). Whether it is outright or tacit agreement. Even behind the scenes is fine.

- Have the issue documented. What is the CURRENT situation? What do want to see for the FUTURE situation? Since there may be different audiences, you may need a one-page document, an online presence, a video, and an executive presentation. Or multiple versions of the same.

- Find fellow change agents. Try to form a common vision and stay focus on that rather than infighting that kills off so many good efforts. This may take several meetings to do.

- Start with small victories. Accomplish something out of the gate no matter how tiny. Celebrate and build from that.

"Secret change agents" have a long road to climb. You don't know which of your colleagues to truly trust. All of these changes are under the radar. But it is possible to do it. Truth, faith, and persistence will get you a long way

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Chapter 33: Bartleby and Noncompliance

"In this very attitude did I sit when I called to him, rapidly stating what it was I wanted him to do—namely, to examine a small paper with me. Imagine my surprise, nay, my consternation, when without moving from his privacy, Bartleby in a singularly mild, firm voice, replied, "I would prefer not to."

I sat awhile in perfect silence, rallying my stunned faculties. Immediately it occurred to me that my ears had deceived me, or Bartleby had entirely misunderstood my meaning. I repeated my request in the clearest tone I could assume. But in quite as clear a one came the previous reply, "I would prefer not to."

"Prefer not to," echoed I, rising in high excitement, and crossing the room with a stride. "What do you mean? Are you moon-struck? I want you to help me compare this sheet here—take it," and I thrust it towards him.

"I would prefer not to," said he.

I looked at him steadfastly. His face was leanly composed; his gray eye dimly calm. Not a wrinkle of agitation rippled him. Had there been the least uneasiness, anger, impatience or impertinence in his manner; in other words, had there been any thing ordinarily human about him, doubtless I should have violently dismissed him from the premises. But as it was, I should have as soon thought of turning my pale plaster-of-paris bust of Cicero out of doors. I stood gazing at him awhile, as he went on with his own writing, and then reseated myself at my desk. This is very strange, thought I. What had one best do? But my business hurried me. I concluded to forget the matter for the present, reserving it for my future leisure. So calling Nippers from the other room, the paper was speedily examined." Bartleby the Scrivener by Herman Melville

The above passage is the first time that Bartleby deploys passive resistance. But his polite refusal brings out harsh words and fury by nearly all that confront him. It leads him to prison and eventually death.

This is a case of pushing back on more busywork without emotion, any rationale, or anything to hold to. The receiver is defenseless because their wishes have been quietly denied. And that makes it their problem to deal with. And any further conversation is stopped because the speaker said an emphatic no with no details as to why.

Can this be provided in a modern workplace as an attitude? At best for a short period. Resistance whether passive or active is frowned on by companies. They paid you. Now you are theirs to use as they see fit. You are replaceable if truly causing issues. There are hundreds of prospective employees willing to take your place.

But what if a whole department or organization started to do this? They would be frightened. First, they would look for the leader(s) to remove them. But a "Bartleby resistance" has no leaders. They have no demands. They just sit there doing little. And in your face taunting you, the hardworking and formerly beloved manager. Time to get the authorities to remove them and find replacements.

But what if "this little rebellion" grew larger and no one wanted to work at your company? Let your managers think that one over.

References

Melville, Herman. 2004. "Bartleby the Scrivener." Project Gutenberg. February 23. www.gutenberg.org.

Chapter 34: Rebellion

While you and some employees are probably upset with the company, you probably are not at the stage of outright rebellion. But something pushes you over the top. In the movie *Nine to Five*, it ends up with kidnapping their boss after their manager finds various ways to exploit his workers.

Libcom has a document on workplace organizing including taking advantages of mini-rebellions

An attitude of rebellion can lead to magnificent failures or truly glorious results. But you won't know till you try,

Libcom. 2006. "Workplace organising." libcom. October 11. libcom.org

Shift Six: A Dash of Management

Chapter 35: Collective Section Comments

This section is one of the longest and deals with the many means that your bosses attempt to manage you and your teammates. Often this uses extreme manipulation and social control. They bring about the emotions and behaviors that we talk about earlier. So this chapter ties together with many themes together.

Nothing is as it really seems. It is mostly appearances filled with flaws. We will attempt to take away the myths, the bullshit, and get to what it really means for you and your company.

Chapter 36: Social Control

Through company culture, behavior management, electronic surveillance, and a million other means, your company and all others are spending **a lot of effort** getting you to act in a certain way and punish those that do not. As the Wikipedia article below outlines, there are many tools at management's disposal to get the desired results, From certain phrases being used about your work or not being a team player. To try making you feel bad, guilty, full of shame, or many other feelings.

But all managers have one deep unspoken fear. What keeps them up at night is the real possibility that their "beloved" team going negative. And why wouldn't that happen? Your company is undergoing a tremendous rate of change. You have no physical or digital space to let out steam and freely speak up. Energy and emotions build up. Some companies have underground or alternative meeting mechanisms. But usually, this is not the case.

To counter this, managers will either stress staying always positive or talking to them first. Sadly, every time an employee opens their mouth they are being judged. And it also strengthens the existing company hierarchies.

Fuck that. Out of negative conversations, great social and process, great change can happen. Set up a parallel structure with an alternative safe place to have a dialogue. (Management may be so threatened that they may want to pose as an employee) Publish your alternate employee opinion survey and share the results.

Employers don't control your soul, heart, or mind. Time to take the blinders off and celebrate labor day every day. This is Day 1 of building the ideal work world that you want to live in. Fight back.

References

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Chapter 37: Management Meetings (1 on 1, Skip Level)

Involuntary meetings are another form of social control. Especially those by your middle management (those several pay grades above you). So, they hold the infamous skip-level meetings where they can talk to you," their" employee. And you are dammed if you accept and dammed if you do not.

Let's say that you accept. It is a daunting fifteen or thirty minutes. Because the shithead on the other side of the room will judge EVERYTHING that you say. So, you could freeze up. Or deal with the tremendous pressure to look clever just to justify your modest salary.

Tactics you can do:

- Comply and give the answers that you think that you are expecting

- Ask one provocative question to take care and throw the whole thing off and watch them spend the rest of the meeting recovering and posturing. It may get them thinking.

- Do the Bartleby thing — "I would prefer not to." But this may be at risk of your career.

- Use it as a reverse "interview" What they bring up shows what is important to them. What is not brought up is not on their radar. That alone is good knowledge.

With your manager, it is somewhat similar. But since you are their direct report, they are concerned with:

- Are you doing the job?

- What is your attitude?

- Will you be staying or leaving?

- What problems are you facing? Are they of your own creation? Can you solve them on your own or do you need to drag me into it?

They are also looking for the following:

- Are you too quiet?

- Are you too angry?

- Are you an idealistic/passionate?

You should use your first meeting to see if you need to "dumb it down"/play safe. Or have you really found a champion that wants change? These meetings are never easy and so different from situation to situation, that it is nearly impossible to give general advice.

References

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Chapter 38: Layoffs

Your upper management does all that it can to please its shareholders, the market, and certain important institutions. And that means watching the bottom line of revenue, net income, and earnings per share. Because this is what A-level whores of business do. They entice, embrace, engage, say a wistful goodbye, and then move on.

And this insane process impacts the daily lives of employees. It reinforces the idea that everyone is expendable. No one is invaluable. So don't ever fall for that illusion.

Layoffs are the final sign of betrayal and incompetence at your company. An employee contract is always at will ready to be terminated at any moment. A layoff means that the company feels that it is more important to save money rather than retrain you. They do not care how much history and knowledge goes out the door. Which is truly tragic. As long as that bottom line of profit looks good. Usually, this is done inhumanely and "professionally". The key is to get you tossed out the door fast and gruffly. There is a real fear that the vengeful employee will attack things and make a scene. Good riddance to you, the bad trash.

Once you are on your own and off their radar, don't expect much. Companies will provide you as minimal information as possible. And you have to wait what seems like two eternities.

The company provides you with minimal info and you have to wait and wait for that first and maybe only severance check. As well as expensive health care.

If you are lucky, then you are also entitled to unemployment. But this is a tough leash to wear. You may have to show that you are actively looking. And if you get and get fired from a temporary job, you could lose unemployment completely. It is completely demeaning and stressful.

The pressure to look for a new job is immense. You feel alone against the world. You may interview a company and never hear back. You may have strong feelings of abandonment and betrayal against your former company. You likely feel that you are getting nowhere. It is a terrible time. And do not let anyone tell you differently.

When you get an offer(s), you have to deal with "decisionitis." Which job do you choose (if any)? Is it better to continue searching or "just settle?" Whatever decision is made, there is always some sense of "buyer's regret."

Some words of advice that got us through this.

First, you are never alone. At some point in one's life, you are likely to go through this once. Others are going through the same thing with you. Your family and friends are here for you.

Second, you will come out of this better for it. You learned some things along the way including possibly new skills. After this happens once, then you learn that it is not the end of the world.

Third, it is a transition. Some call it between opportunities. Transitions have a start and an end. Sometimes they are quick. In other cases, it may take some time.

When it's over, never forget the experience. And move on.

Finally, always pay it forward and help others who are now in the same situation. Because their former employer certainly is not.

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Chapter 39: Reviews

If you survive the work year, then you typically get a review. Managers DREAD preparing and giving it. Employees are in fear of what their boss thinks of them. In the past, this was more tied to salary increases and promotions which made it even more stressful.

If you have a good boss, then you had plenty of feedback throughout the year. Consequently, the review should almost be monotonous. But some bosses do not even do that. So, the whole thing is an unwelcome surprise for you. Especially, if your corporate management gets enthused by metrics. The sad result is that your immediate future is in your management's hands and how they subjectively judge/rate you.

Also, your review may have an overall number or rating. Some companies will not keep the average employee. But retain only those with the top ratings. It is an ugly dance based on subjective judgments that you can lose your job at any minute. Numbers that can also impact your merit increase or bonus. So companies may limit how many top ratings/numbers can be given out. And then your manager has to apologize to those that deserve it because there are not enough slots to use for top ratings. All bullshit that is on the cheap side.

You usually have a space on the review for your comments. This is rarely filled out. However, it is a possible opportunity to comment. But know that you will be judged on anything negative written by you.

So, what can you do? Always keep your resume current if you need to bolt voluntarily or not. Have a list of kudos from customers and success stories to counter anything that your manager may bring up. Don't go dark and bring up dirt. While personally satisfying for a short time, it may impact your reputation and lose you a future reference.

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Chapter 40: The Lean Organization Exposed

[This was going to be a conference paper and paper. But the conference heads found it too negative. You be the judge.]

Introduction

Lean organizations have been around for some time especially in the manufacturing world. With fewer resources, they are expected to create higher customer value. They are self-improving, ever focused on their mission. And never stop doing that.

Many people think that working for a lean organization is a good choice. One selling point is that there is a flatter smaller hierarchical organization to deal with. And that means fewer managers to report to. Better yet, there are more employee leadership opportunities since employees are doing tasks formerly done by management. So, they should feel greatly empowered.

This all sounds like a great thing no? So, why aren't more prospective employees flocking to joining them? Is there some dark secret that needs to be exposed?

Let us open the door and step behind the facade. No security badge is needed.

Now on the inside, we see a much different picture. Everywhere you look, you see an organization overstretched beyond all safety limits. Employees are close to physical and mental collapse. The words overwork and fatigue do not even begin to cover what they are undergoing. There is no work-personal boundary. Work activities bleed into personal space and abuse personal activities. The social loss is tremendous.

A shorter hierarchy is still very much a hierarchy. There is still someone above you and above them. It just means things flow down unchecked, even faster.

And that wonderful list of activities formerly performed by management. It just a sneaky way to get you to do more labor. Employees are already short-staffed with the often-involuntary departure of their laid off, fired, or otherwise exited former colleagues. In addition to doing their own and former employee's tasks, they are "empowered" to take on even more. A long task list of management's choosing is not self-empowering. It is just more shit to get done and is an intense short roadway to an early grave.

A lean organization is always in a state of change and chaos. There is little to hold onto and no sense of corporate history. It is always about today and tomorrow. To ensure that their will and shadowy vision be implemented, management emits a continuous series of communications at such a fast series of bursts that no one can keep track of the current set of rules to follow or latest metrics to be judged by. This includes management themselves. No one is overseeing an out of control system. These communications have a misaligned sense of urgency. If employees are given choices to make, they are always very limited, never of any benefit, or of their own choosing.

Lean organization management talks about company culture. But how can this be, given that nothing is stable other than worker oppression and alienation? Social control and vague phrases such as "being a team player" and "teamwork" are used to keep the worker in check.

Worker Reaction

As you can imagine, it is not a picnic for employees.

The result is as Marx described; workers are estranged from their own job. They feel neither human nor animal. Individuality is not rewarded and is discouraged. The one mantra of one team is stressed at almost every opportunity. The "great depersonalization and devaluation" scheme is always underway.

We already mentioned how tired and stressed the poor employees are. But there are also other reactions and implications.

Employees keep it to themselves and grumble internally. But they are upset about how they are being so impersonally treated.

Long hours mean building stress, less sleep, and an increasing number of health implications. You cannot add much customer value when you are ready to nod off. Instead, you end up making silly, avoidable mistakes and feeling bad inside.

While a good salary and generous stock options can help in increasing one's financial net worth, it cannot offset the daily assault to one's personal worth. So many employees having left this shell game of a system have expressed nothing but relief and deep satisfaction having moved on.

Coping/Resisting Strategies

There is a variety of coping and resistance mechanisms, the poor employee can use. It depends in part if they wish for a short exit or many years of future paychecks. And if they care more about their reputation or making a momentary dent in the lean organization.

1. Just get by. Show up. Do the job best that you can. And leave. But these actions of mere compliance can lead to severe internal cognitive dissonance. That is containing two opposing ideas inside you for years on end. And not even going somewhere remote to yell some well-chosen expletives out. Far better to just leave even if it is for a smaller salary.

2. Saboteur

   The word comes from those frustrated workers that took their wooden shoes and disrupted the work say throwing them inside the machines that needed to be immediately stopped and repaired.

   Later, the Luddites just outright destroyed manufacturing machines due to deteriorating labor conditions. They took on armies and unfriendly prosecutors in courtrooms. And are remembered even today. The legendary Ned Ludd was one of the first in the movement to protest working conditions.

   The idea is to make subtle and visible changes to slow down or outright destroy the system components as a negotiation tactic. Or a quick exit strategy.

In the digital age, it is more often a software and no longer a physical "factory." So, a simple shoe can no longer hamper or stop a workplace. But a creative being can find other means that when deployed would make even Ned Ludd pleased.

3. Outright Resistance

A very short-term path because resisters are quieted first and then let go. Their trail is immediately erased as if they did not exist.

4. Stealth and Subtle Change

This is the option with the potential biggest payoff. But it takes a lot of patience and hiding in the shadows. It may also lead to an involuntary departure if discovered. The goal is to bring about non-insurrectionary social anarchism to the corporation. Possible techniques include

- The steady and stealth building of parallel structures to manage the organization.

- Encourage a true culture that supports the free association of employees. This may take place on an unauthorized employee electronic meeting site.

- Let groups and projects self-form and self-organize. This is the fastest way to increase productivity and build up true employee empowerment. The employees determine when a group/project needs to be formed, how it will be operated, what is its missions and activities, and when will it end.

- Build up mutual aid societies where individuals help each other emotionally, physically, and as a knowledge/work resource.

- Create true self-managed groups. Not the perversion that lean organizations have which boldly proclaims that employees will have limited autonomy. The leash is never that far away from being pulled tight by management.

The risks and rewards are high. One may get caught. But if done "under the radar", an already occupied management will be unable to keep track. And a magnificent failure can be created in the meantime.

From the sidelines, we will continue to watch and document the sacrifices, fallacies, failures, and ultimate destruction of the already tottering lean organization.

Chapter 41: Measurements, a Management Fraud

At your company, each employee, whether a sports figure or a "lowly" worker has their performance measures through "objective" metrics. And where there is a metric, you will find nearby a clueless manager is gushing or frowning over "the numbers."

In your team meetings, your manager will show seemingly endless sets of slides of one metric after another. They will also talk about how certain members are in exclusive clubs such as the 100 satisfied customers rating club. It is all bullshit.

These "wonderful" metrics create nothing but unneeded tension. Pitting you against you. Team members against each other. Teams against teams. Organizations against each other. And so on it goes.

No good ever comes out of doing these cross-comparisons. All this does is create feelings of jealously, resignation, panic, and anxiety. Is the whole thing worth it for a meaningless fucking number?

How did this whole thing begin? It started during a period of great labor and class unrest in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Frederick Winslow Taylor came up with the idea that human's work can be measured. The goal was higher productivity (less workers) meant to more profits.

Here is how he put it in his work The Principles of Scientific Management which cme out in 1911:

> "The principal object of management should be to secure the maximum prosperity for the employer, coupled with the maximum prosperity for each employee."
>
> ...
>
> "No one can be found who will deny that in the case of any single individual the greatest prosperity can exist only when that individual has reached his highest state of efficiency; that is, when he is turning out his largest daily output."

Although the movement by that name died out, its spirit still lives. Employers and countries are always interested in maximizing and conserving employee resources. It is also used in justifying in keeping employees. Psychological and other metrics are also used as well to get the "total picture."

But there are various concerns with metrics:

1. Many useful and complex behaviors cannot be easily measured. Implementing change/processes, breaking down the silos, and instead foster communication are just a few examples.

2. You are only as good as your last measurement. So you cannot enjoy the glory of your past accomplishments. It is work, work, work until you pass out, die, are laid off, or retire.

3. Never happy with the current outcomes, management keeps raising the metric objectives. All in the name of making you more "efficient."But any "improvements" are on the backs of you, the poor employee that already has had enough.

4. Endless measurement leads to needless competition and not cooperation. An" us versus them mentality" ensues

Charlie Brown once had a cartoon stating Tell your Statistics to Shut Up.
It is high time for corporate America to do the same.

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Chapter 42: One Team

One recent trick management uses is this idea of one team. It is not sufficient that teams are regional and national. No, internal ties must be fostered and strengthened. It is a misguided attempt to break down divisions and collaborate together on cross-organizational goals.

But this is just another bullshit mechanism. They are always differences between regions and countries that need to be embraced rather than reconciled. There is no worldwide culture, there are national and regional cultures. Large group collaborations are not easy even if you are physically close together.

If everyone is treated exactly the same, then there is no recognition of individual talents.

One team oversimplifies for management and provides another means to suppress discussion. It reduces everything to the least common denominator.

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Chapter 43: The Upper Management Org Meeting

Upper management meetings (All-Hands, Town Halls, etc.) are the worst. Nothing like seeing a well-dressed over-caffeinated overlord spending time with the troops in a large office meeting room setting. Or even more fun is watching an overlong video stream of their ass deposited in a richly furnished office. Then they open their mouth to reinforce the idea that they live in their own goldfish bowl. When they get questions, they answer coldly as a manager and not someone that has seen the pain that was the motivation behind the employee's question. So they come across as wooden and aloof.

They may cover financials and cover the imperfect past and the soon to be a glorious future. But they never explain the rationale behind growing and goals. Because there never is truly an end goal. How much growth is truly needed? How big is big enough? Don't expect any answers.

Some managers are so insecure, that they make these meetings mandatory. Many ask for questions to be submitted ahead of time rather than getting them live. What a silly and stupid thing. You don't know what they are presenting. So how can you ask questions about what you don't know? Again, a sign of social control and wanting a "safe" and self-contained environment.

I am sure that you also enjoy it when multiple managers are together at these meetings. And also boost each other they tell multiple bad jokes or fake enthusiasm."Hi Cheryl. Isn't it FANTASTIC to be with all these smart employees at our quarterly meeting? It sure is Bobby and I'm SO THRILLED to be here. I put my vacation on hold to attend."

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Chapter 44: The Team Meeting

We saved for you one of the best rituals near the end of this section. That is the daily, weekly, monthly, etc. team meeting. This required calendar invite is partly a social control festival, enduring minutes of mindless speech, endless slides of numbing metric review.

At each meeting, you find out what the current expected behavior is, And that is because of this week's news/procedures which will be overwritten by next week's procedure. Questions may be asked as long as they don't lead to discussions. Useful discussions have no forum to get addressed. True conflict is discouraged. It is all a show with a semblance of democracy.

And like that, the dog and pony show is over. And your life can go on.

Chapter 45: Changing the Team

With a team, you can build around their skills. Or bend your will for them to follow a certain system. A good and patient manager might try the former. But less confident management wants quick results. So, they break up teams or add new members.

But mergers of teams rarely give the synergistic results expected. Employees feel betrayed and this may be the last straw to move on.

Do you fight or flee? If you flee, you may use the exit interview and a goodbye letter to explain your rationale.

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Chapter 46: Perfection is 4 weeks away

The new reality of management is the past is irrelevant, the present is insufficient, and the future will be magnificent and solve all problems. Management works on feeding false and ever-changing dreams. It comes from a place of scarcity rather than abundance.

Don't fall for this nonsense. Challenge it when you can.

Chapter 47: Disconnect

Given the rate of change of policies, people, and customers, miscommunication will very likely happen. This can be between you and your peers, management, other employees, customers, third parties,

Management will need someone to blame. So they will make you apologize profusely, "fall on your sword", and then move on. Worst case they will fire and blame you for things you likely were not involved with.

A good manager would take the blame for the team. But that only happens in movies nowadays.

To save your skin, always document what you do, and counter the facts if you are not truly guilty.

Chapter 48: Eulogies

It is bound to happen. A colleague that you have worked with for years and considered a friend passes away. And you are filled with feelings of incredible loss and regret. But maybe also a sense of appreciation of having spent that short amount of time together.

Soon your manager or someone that knew them sends a note out. It talks about them as a person with maybe a story included. And you feel warm remembering them.

But worker eulogies will also cover their work-life such as accomplishments, good worker characteristics, and more. Depending on how written, it can be another subtle jab at social control on what the characteristics of an ideal worker are. Honor the person with your own eulogies free from management eyes shared by those that knew them.

Try to cherish your peers during the seemingly brief time that you work together. Laugh with them and appreciates their gifts while you re both present today.

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Shift Seven: Strategy and Tactics

Chapter 49: Collective Section Comments

This is our last "meaty" chapter. It could have been longer. But the other sections have already covered things in detail.

Chapter 50: Guerilla Warfare

Guerilla warfare entails fighting a stronger enemy without directly confronting them. This is a long-term battle that can be eradicated if management finds out about it through traitors or on their own.

This takes a good of thought, working in stealth mode, and may fail in the end. But if you are nimble, changing your strategy very frequently, then you may succeed.

Chapter 51: No Violence

Some readers may think that we are in favor of violence against management and the destruction of corporate buildings. We emphatically are not and simply say don't. There are other means to get to the same means accomplished. If you follow a violent path, expect a short life because the local, state, national, and international police will be on your ass.

Chapter 52: Open Letters

If truly desperate, writing an open email/ letter to management. Nothing gets attention faster than a loyal employee questioning things. This is especially true when you call out the management by name and with details. They will feel shamed and threatened. In the end, they will give you likely a personal tongue lashing face to face and write a well-crafted letter to the whole organization indicating the person is misguided and that nothing is wrong

But lingering doubts will remain. And from those seeds, great things may grow,

Shift Eight: Just Some Words Before We All Go

Chapter 53: The End?

[We had two different endings and decided to use both.]
So this book must end without any real conclusion

- The dreams of revolution continue in those that think it will solve something and be quick.

- The worker continues to be oppressed.

- The manager continues to lay down more work

- And upper management continues to "manage" reactively from one day to another.

One day, this entity will be overrun or fall apart. Those that act like it be there forever are doomed. Stay calm and take care.
***
At the end of the day, things will likely stay the same and the corporation will be largely unchanged. Most of the same players will stay intact with their large salaries, bonuses, and other perks. The company will still have a non-modest headquarters and luxurious offices for the chief officers. The profit motive and the stock price will guide daily operations while the capitalist system continues to flounder.

So is there a Guide on how to proceed? Is life really about bland acceptance and feeling that everything is meaningless?

We are not much different than Sisyphus, condemned to push a boulder up a large hill and then watch it roll down again once reaching the top. And we have to do that for the rest of our work lives, Albert Camus in *The Myth of Sisyphus* talks about joyfully accepting our role, focusing on our environment and changes in the boulder, etc., and from that, we begin to find our humanity. That is one choice.

Others will find a small but consistent way to rebel each day. It may be wearing a Circle A or FUCK the CORPORATION tee shirt. It may be recording what is happening. It may be taking a secret piss on the corporate lawn or some other ritual. It may be just commiserating with others and discussing ideas such as social control, worker alienation, cost control, or HR practices. Those discussions, even if nothing comes of it are your sacred moment of agency and freedom. Let them continue and grow.

Corporations cannot stay intact forever. They take lots of money, delusion, and people to run. Customers are fickle, Circumstances are forever changing. Management will move on one way or another. Continue to read, self-evaluate, and build as you see fit a parallel organization structure. Challenge the central myths overtly and covertly. Find like-minded spirits to deal with corporate life straight on.

Remember, that you are going against the might of the entire corporation. Organizations have hundreds of years of practice to hone in of skills of wage exploitation, employee slavery, social

control, and making profits. You have only you and your life so far. But your non-compliance, voice, and labor are your strongest weapons especially when combined with the strength of other like-minded beings within or outside the company (such as affinity groups).

If you cannot accept and you cannot walk away from a situation, then your only choice is to implement change. How expansive will that change be? That is your decision. We hope that you can make it from a place of calm rather than reactivity and fear.

We wish you great success against such an irrational and exploitative system. There is both a compliant employee, a Bartleby, and a Ned Ludd in each of us. Which one will win out? The one fed with our energy will determine our thoughts, feelings, and actions. Have a fulfilling corporate and personal life in a way you best see fit. And Fuck the Corporation.

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