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In the Land of Difficult People

24 Timeless Tales Reveal How to Tame the Beasts at Work

*Wisdom for Dealing with Typical Workplace Characters
Drawn from the World's Treasury of Folk Stories*

From Tibet to Mexico to the Balkans, every culture has its own cherished folktales. While originally made up to reinforce morals and good behavior, these stories aren't just for kids. Many fables featuring whimsical creatures and talking animals have much to teach grownups about handling slackers, connivers, ogres, and other dreaded real-life figures. But where in the real world do these tricky and treacherous beasts exist? The workplace.

IN THE LAND OF DIFFICULT PEOPLE: 24 Timeless Tales Reveal How to Tame the Beasts at Work (AMACOM; May 15, 2008; \$19.95 Hardcover) by Terrence L. Gargiulo and Gini Graham Scott, Ph.D. presents 24 fables taken from around the world, each exemplifying the best methods to use when dealing with the different kinds of difficult people at work. Gathered from around the world—China, Japan, Persia, Morocco, Denmark, Germany, France, Russia, and other countries, as well as Celtic and Native American traditions—these treasured yarns offer valuable lessons for anyone with interpersonal troubles on the job. After each tale, Gargiulo and Scott provide a brief analysis, drawing parallels between the fable's animals and real world behavior that wreaks havoc on organizations. They wrap up with a list of practical tips and proven tactics for dealing with domineering supervisors, destructive colleagues, and overly independent employees. The book introduces eight common types of personalities who make work a nightmare. They include:

- **Wicked Wolves.** The fairytale kingdom's most ferocious beasts, wolves lurk in the workplace as power-hungry corporate-ladder climbers and the tyrant boss. Tales such as Russia's "The Wolf and the Goat" illustrate how wolf-types lure and devour their prey, and how readers can cope with overly ambitious coworkers whose sometimes questionable ethics threaten to derail the career of anyone they think stands in their way.

- **Stubborn Cats.** Tales like Tibet’s “The Cat and the Mice” capture the folly and unfortunate fate of these stubbornly independent creatures. In the work world their counterparts derail team efforts by refusing to compromise or hanging on doggedly to a wrong-headed strategy out of pride. The book provides practical strategies for getting cooperation from the types of employees who are unwilling to deal with change.
- **Sluggish Snails.** These little critters like to do nothing more than relax in their own shell. On the job, they’re the take-it-slow slackers who swiftly disappear when it’s time to pitch in. Some, like the snail in Denmark’s “The Snail and the Rosebush,” have big dreams for the future, but continually delay acting on them. Readers will find solutions for motivating these unproductive workplace characters.
- **Thin-Skinned Snakes.** Like the creature in India’s “The Snake and the Holy Man,” some humans act in a menacing manner to cover up their own feelings of powerlessness. Overly defensive people are often motivated by the need to protect as well as prove themselves. Readers will find proven techniques for handling the most insecure personalities they may be forced to work with.

Monkeys, lions, and ravens round out the cast of challenging creatures everyone encounters at one time or another in the workplace. Engaging and enlightening, **IN THE LAND OF DIFFICULT PEOPLE** makes it easier to work with the worst of the beasts—and, in the best cases, begin to develop rewarding relationships with lots of different, colorful people.

About the Authors

Terrence L. Gargiulo, President of MakingStories.net, is a speaker and consultant on the role of narrative in organizations, whose clients include Coca-Cola, GM, the Harvard Business School, and the US Coast Guard. He is also the author of *On Cloud Nine: Weathering the Challenge of Many Generations in the Workplace*. He lives in Monterey, California. **Gini Graham Scott, Ph.D.**, is the founder and director of Changemakers. She has written numerous books, including *A Survival Guide for Working with Humans* and *A Survival Guide to Managing Employees from Hell*. She makes her home in Oakland and Santa Monica, California.

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