

Dear Office-Politics: The game everyone plays

Franke James

Franke James, Illustrator

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In these times of buoyant unemployment figures and bookstore self-help aisles crammed with the woeful, it's comforting to reflect that seemingly tranquil workplaces also have their share of neuroses. When the delusions, doubt, and self-destruction that plague offices avalanche into office politics, it's time to consult the experts. Franke James, author and inventor of the game Dear Office-Politics, has been guiding the casualties of real office politics for more than seven years on her website, www.officepolitics.com. For anyone who has lost miserably in the real tussle, Dear Office-Politics can help refine your skills, like the board game Life or (depending on your profession) Battleship.

The epistolary game comes in the form of a book, which is passed between the players. A player reads aloud a real dilemma from a hapless employee who has appealed to the Office Politics website for help. All other players then offer the advice-seeker their suggestions, and the advice-seeker metes out points based on whether the advice is pragmatic, captures the power struggle, and is in the best interest of the company. The best advisor, who should emerge with the highest score, wins the game. And for those players who secretly have a similar dilemma, but crave expert advice, James and her team of contributors give their best advice, based on values of personal integrity and the goal of building relationships.

Pondering the office problems of others, at the least, can make one hanker for one's own. The dilemmas vary in seriousness, but all involve power plays as the universal theme. There are devious colleagues who thief credit for new ideas, clueless bosses protected by their staffs, office slobs and magpies, and the occasional innocent who has unwittingly wandered into the crosshairs of an office sniper. James's splashy sense of humor and style catapults this book from the field of humdrum human resources exercises to an entertaining discussion of the pantheon of office types. And the game is attractively illustrated with zany color photographs and illustrations on every page of these office types. The "office crab" that is the grimacing head of a woman on the body of a crab; the luridly colored photo of a woman with a chef's knife behind her that is emblazoned, "I have had firsthand experience with a backstabber"; and the cover of a suited woman in a shark tank are bound to attract the attention of congenial co-workers looking for an icebreaker.

Winner of the Axiom Business Book Award for 2010, Dear Office-Politics is recommended for team-building meetings, as well as for pleasure reading.

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