

# ■ Dealing With Schemers Without Becoming One

by Tom Terez

Does your workplace seem like a scene from “Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets,” complete with schemers and plotters? You know the type: They’re always pursuing their own agendas. If it suits their plan, they’ll try to get on your good side. If they see you as a barrier, they’ll go over, around, or through you – usually with a smile.

There’s no available Potter-like flick of the magic wand to transform a schemer into a saint. But there *are* ways to improve the situation over time:

- Schemers tend to play people off one another, control information, and put their own success ahead of others’. In other words, they’re game players. And they make it very tempting to play along. Think about it: If someone’s keeping information from you, don’t you want to hide your own precious info from them? Wanting to take them on is only natural – and self-defeating. You’ll start a battle that drains your energy, sours your colleagues, and hurts your customers. And you’ll be labeled as part of the problem.
- Many schemers get their way by subtly bribing people. They put on a friendly air and vaguely promise to help at some point down the road – in exchange for an immediate favor. Their favorite phrase is “I owe you one.” Face it: Schemers rarely deliver on those promises. Take a pass the next time they try to make a deal.
- When a schemer turns on you, the best response is a cool head and a bounty of facts and data. For instance, if a scheming colleague is going behind your back to spread rumors that your project is way over budget, come to the next meeting with

the latest figures proving otherwise. There’s no need to be confrontational – simply present the facts, take questions, and let reality clear up any misunderstandings.

- If the schemer is more aggressive, actively working to sabotage your work area or project, look for a chance to engage him or her in civil conversation about it when colleagues are around – preferably in a meeting. Explain what you are seeing and how you interpret it, and ask whether your concerns are justified. Be as specific as possible, but also be concise, and end by asking the schemer for his take on things. He’ll likely be defensive, but that’s to be expected. His response is fairly unimportant, actually. What you want is to create a public awareness of what’s happening.

**NOTE:** These action ideas are excerpted from the “Difficult Dozen Help Zone,” a free online tool at BetterWorkplaceNow.com. The tool takes just a minute to use and gives you a free e-mailed report full of recommendations. Use it now – and get instant advice for dealing with Gossips, Whiners, Hotheads, Apathetics, and eight other challenging types. Go to <http://BetterWorkplaceNow.com/help/>

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