

Targeted – *The Story of a Pathological Work Place Bully*

Robert Pearson Richardson
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Bullying doesn't just happen on the school ground. It takes place in the workplace as well. In his recently published book *Targeted: The Story of a Pathological Serial Work Place Bully* (June 28, 2015), Robert Richardson relates his frightening story of being bullied throughout his later professional career by a persistent and aggressive bully whom he names "Morris." Morris eventually ruined Richardson's career at three different companies. Richardson is very open about his experiences, even to the point of identifying the companies at which the bullying took place.



In his book however, the Company names and the names of all those involved, including the Bully, have been changed to "protect both the innocent and the guilty."

In fact, in his acknowledgements, he states (tongue-in-cheek):

"... I really want ... to give a very special thanks to the Management of Company_1 who allowed Morris with his bullying to fester and continue on his reign of terror on me. ...

Also, special thanks goes to the Management at Company_2 who had allowed Morris to go on his merry way of targeting me, defaming my character, and getting me fired at Company_2. ...

And last but not least, to the Management at Company_3, who acted like sheep, listened to and believing the lies and BS from that horrible bully, never questioning me, and taking the easy route by letting me go three short weeks after my Boss had originally told me I was doing a great job.

Without all those Management decisions, this book would never have been written."

Company_1

Richardson's tale of terror begins with his employment at Company_1 where he worked as a Tandem developer starting in 1997. It was there, after four years of successful development, that he met Morris and became good friends with him, even to the point of opening up to him about personal problems he was having.

Then suddenly, Morris began accusing him of talking about him behind his back, something Richardson vehemently denied. The accusations continued, and the relationship with Morris grew worse. Morris started defaming Richardson among his associates. He set up get-togethers and specifically did not invite Richardson. He continually stared at Richardson with dirty looks and made loud noises that were meant to imply that Richardson was physically threatening him. He complained to HR about Richardson.



Richardson and other team members who were aware of what was going on pleaded with the group supervisor to reign in Morris. However, no action was ever taken.

Finally, Richardson was informed that his job was being outsourced to India; and he was let go with a termination package. His final day was in 2007, ten years after he had initially been employed by Company_1. If nothing else, Richardson felt a great deal of relief that he was finally getting away from the bully. Little did he know that that this reprieve would not last for long.

Tandem Consulting

HP

Richardson next began working as a Tandem consultant. After several short assignments, he obtained a long-term consulting position at Hewlett Packard in Little Rock, Arkansas. After eight months, he became an employee. Four years later, in 2012, Richardson fell victim to a large HP layoff.

Company_2

Richardson landed a new assignment at Company_2. On his second day, to his horror, he saw Morris in the parking lot. During the next three months that Richardson was at Company_2, he saw Morris many times. Each time, Morris signed in at the main desk and was under continual escort. It turned out that Morris was interviewing at the company, and he took every opportunity to defame Richardson to management. Richardson once heard him say, "I can't believe you really hired this guy."

Richardson was ultimately let go by Company_2. At the beginning of his last week, he saw Morris being escorted out of the building, loudly complaining that "What do you mean? You told me I had a job." The manager responded, "We thank you for alerting us to him. ... If you weren't here, he'd still be here. ... I don't want you anywhere near the other members of my team. You might just be the worst bully I have ever seen."

To add insult to injury, the consulting firm through which Richardson had been working terminated its relationship with him.

Company_3

Richardson finished out his consulting career at Company_2. Company_3 was a neighboring company which is where Morris appeared to be interviewing and visiting a friend. His last job was with Company_2.

To seal his fate at Company_2, Morris actually did an interview with Company_2. When he passed Mr. Richardson while he was heading for a meeting, he stopped and publicly defamed his character loud enough for everyone in the hall to hear.

Except for his mention of Company_3 in his Acknowledgement and his note that this was his last job, he gives no further information about his bullying at Company_3. However, his self-admission that he had substantially lost his self-esteem and self-confidence through years of bullying may have contributed to his demise at this company.

Richardson's Final Trials

Richardson has been diagnosed with PTSD (Post-Traumatic Stress Syndrome) as a result of the stress he has endured for over a decade (yes, you don't have to be in combat to get PTSD). His house is in foreclosure, and he is facing potential bankruptcy.

He has turned to religion to try to learn how to forgive Morris, but so far he has met with little success in this endeavor.

However, he decided on trying to help others who are finding themselves facing bullies. This was the purpose in writing his book. At the end of the book, he lists many resources ranging from other books to web sites that give good advice on how to handle bullying. He has even started his own organization, Bully Proof Assistant.

My Personal Experience

I related very closely to Richardson's tale because I also experienced extreme workplace bullying. My company, The Sombers Group, had a large contract for software development at Dow Jones Telerate; and I had a team of a dozen or so developers on site. We reported to a hard-core bully who I'll simply call John.

John would call me into his office daily and berate me for an hour about all the problems my people were presumably causing. I dreaded leaving at night. I would sneak out to the elevator and hope that John wasn't on it. If he were, he insisted that I come back to his office for another hour or two of abusive language.

Fortunately, my people (and I) were pretty well protected by my superb project manager who knew how to stand up to John and get him off our backs. In fact, I'll name him. He was Ron Byer, Jr., now President of NetWeave Integrated Solutions.

I remember one incident in which one of my female contractors had to skip a day to get her sick child to the hospital. When she returned the next day, John accosted her and demanded that she never take another day off, no matter the reason. She, being a mother, was not about to back down; and she and John got into a nose-to-nose shouting match. It took Ron to get in the middle of them to break up the fight.

To our delight, John was let go by Telerate toward the end of the project. We were told it was because of his bullying. To our horror, he returned a month later.

When the project ended, Telerate did indeed fire him. He came to me looking for help in finding a job (bullies just don't see the other side). I lined him up with an interview with another customer of ours, a part-time bully. I thought it would be great to see these two interacting with each other. Unfortunately, our part-time bully didn't want anything to do with John. I haven't heard from him since.

Summary

Richardson's book is a quick read – about an hour or two. It is an excellent book to read if you have ever been the subject of workplace bullying, whether minor or intense. Even if you think you may be a bully, it is worthwhile reading this book to try to get a feel for the other side of the picture. Furthermore, Richardson gives good advice to follow if you should ever be the subject of bullying.