

# HUMOR



## The Anonymous Shredder

By Musafir

It took me years to comprehend and digest why people function so differently in the corporate world as compared to where I was coming from. Whether we like it or not, corporate world is not the real world. In order to ensure you don't take too much time in finding your footing in this space, I'm sharing with you some insider unwritten rules of the game. This comes from my experience of working with top ten fortune 500 companies for nearly fifty years.

Those who have worked in the corporate world know that it is a kind of jungle, where there are only two ways to survive. First, take risk and get yourself noticed and secondly, hide in anonymity. The first option is easy, therefore, most of us follow that. They either survive; get to the top, or become road kills in the race of unachievable. After all, it is not easy to keep on the right side of one's boss. It is very uncomfortable to anticipate their every whim, and laugh at their pathetic jokes.

The second route of survival is being anonymous which is not easy either. You have to be a cockroach like Shreedher to do that.

During a routine reorganization at our workplace, my boss and I were going through the org chart. My boss stopped me and asked, "Who is this Shreedher guy? He is supposed to be an employee here, but I don't see any phone number or cube number assigned to him. Go and find him."

Not finding a trace of Shreedher in our office area, I decided to take the help of the Personnel Manager, Miss Heart Warmers.

"Do we have any employee working for us named Shreedher?" I asked her.

After looking through the names she asked me, "You mean Shreedher Supersad?"

"Sounds like him."

"Well, he is a male and was employed five years ago as a manufacturing engineer. Why? Did he die or something?"

"I don't know Miss Heart Warmers? We are just trying to locate him."

Exhausting our search, we decided to look in the basement. Suddenly, I heard a sneeze coming from behind a pile of cardboard boxes. I went there and found a man sitting at a desk holding a shredder.

"Who are you?" I asked

"Oh I am Shreedher Supersad," he answered.

"How long have you been hiding here?" I asked.

"Not hiding. I work here since the day I was hired," he chirped.

I took him to my boss. My boss asked him, "What do you do?"

"I shred papers," Shreedher replied.

“You are a manufacturing engineer. Why do you shred papers?”

“My first boss called me Shredder instead of Shreedher and assigned me the task of shredding all the old reports and documents. That’s why.”

“Why didn’t you correct him?”

“If the boss keeps calling you by the wrong name, you should change your name to match the one he is using. One should never attempt to correct his boss.”

“What do you shred now?”

“Whatever I find around me”

My boss was so confused that he assigned him to work under me.

Next morning, I brought him into my office and said, “I want to bring you to the regular work life where you’ll find windows and sunshine. You have been suffering in a claustrophobic environment for too long,” I suggested.

“No, I like the basement. I want to stay there,” pleaded Shreedher.

“But why?” I asked

“I am afraid that some guy in a three-piece suit is going to walk in, slap an anniversary pin on me, and tell me that I am fired. That’s why.”

“Listen Shreedher, You’ve been warming the bench too long. You are an engineer. I am going to assign you a real job. Our plant in Kokomo, Indian is having frequent machinery and equipment breakdowns. I want you to go there and do a reliability and maintainability study.”

Shreedher started trembling and said, “I am afraid of walking into a manufacturing plant.”

“Listen Shreedher, you have to do some real work. If you don’t, I’ll have to take some action.”

The next day Shreedher came to work, but was not speaking a word. I knew that he used to have vocal cords, but they suddenly died.

So, I took him to Miss Heart Warmers. She put Viral on disability leave.

“We value the wellbeing of our employees. You gave him too much stress that is not right. You need to create a congenial work environment for our employees,” Miss Heart Warmers lectured me.

On Shreedher’s return from disability after three months, I decided to leave him alone and assigned him his old job of shredding papers.

Soon after that I accepted another assignment in the corporation. About fifteen years later after my retirement, the company hired me as a consultant in my old facility. Meanwhile, the company went through bankruptcy and restructure. Thousands of employees were let go.

One day I went to the basement of my old office for nostalgia sake. I heard someone breathing under the piles of cardboard boxes. On my approach, Shreedher jumped out of the pile.

“Shreedher, are you still here?” I asked in shock and amazement.

“Yes, he squeaked.”

“So, you survived all the turmoil and bankruptcy of the company?”

“Yes, when you lay low, the storms pass over you.”

“What do you do now?”

“Same old, I shred papers. After all, they call me the Shredder for nothing.”

“Yes, you do your work and do the best shredding anyone can do. I’ve learned a lot about the art of anonymity from you. When I’ll write my next book on corporate survival, I’ll have a chapter on anonymity dedicated to you.”

We hugged and parted our way.