

Selected extracts from:

A Survival Guide to Workplace Behavior
The Organizational Zoo



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Expected release date, October 2006
Updates found at: www.organizationalzoo.com

Foreword

This book consists of humorous observations of the characteristics and behaviors of the creatures in your "Organizational Zoo." It provides some essential survival guidelines for the safari that is your career. As you read, you will come to recognize the various Zoo creatures and learn how to deal with them. This book gives great insight for the inexperienced and provides a useful reinforcement reference for the more experienced among us who every day must manage the interactions between the creatures in our Zoos.

Disclaimer

No creatures were harmed in the making of this book, although some may be a little insulted at being compared to their human equivalents. Any apparent victimization or vilification of creatures is entirely coincidental and applies only to the stereotype, not to any individual creature.

Any creatures claiming to be adversely affected by the content of this book may submit a complaint in writing directly to the author. Any humans who can see themselves in any of the profiles are congratulated for being self-aware. If you don't like what you see, don't bug me about it. Do something about it yourself.

The characters in this book are indeed real, but their names have been suppressed to protect the innocent (me). If you think you recognize yourself, just remember we all have different perspectives (see Glossary), and I might not have meant you. If you are considering the possibility to sue me, I definitely did not mean you.

The Organizational Zoo Concept

The concept of the Organizational Zoo came to me while travelling to a meeting I dreaded. I did not wish to attend because of the combination of "creatures" that were going to be present, with no sheltering plants in sight. I imagined the range of managers who were going to be at the meeting and why they were gathering. It felt as if they were herding the prey on the open grasslands in order to execute their will.

This fleeting analogy stuck in my mind and slowly built into a wider metaphor that seemed to apply to the whole organization. I realized that viewing the organization metaphorically as a collection of creatures interacting in, and with, their environment was a useful analysis tool. It provided a removed perspective to assess relationships and the flow of interdependencies in the environment.

Using this approach, I reconsidered how to approach the meeting. It was going to be a feeding frenzy. The predators had arranged the gathering on their terms so the pickings would be easy and the prey plentiful. I had to devise a strategy of how to survive the meeting without being wounded by the predators. I could run away (a very useful creature tactic, which only delays the inevitable). I could just stand tall and take the punishment like a plant, simply regrowing the lost pieces after the frenzy. But why be dominated? There had to be something else that could be done. What would other creatures do to shift the situation back into their favor?

Fish, like plants, just accept that some are going to be eaten. Aggregating in large schools, they consider safety in numbers as the best survival strategy (until their own the number is up, of course). In effect, they stack a meeting to reduce the chances of any specific individual. However, Russian roulette never really appealed to me, especially when I am betting my own life.

Perhaps, like a rabid dog desperate for survival, I could attack anyone that came remotely close to me with great aggression. Maybe I could be a blue-ringed octopus and rapidly change the landscape by emitting an "ink screen" to distract the predators.

While thinking through how we could learn from how nature responds, it occurred to me that perhaps we have not evolved as far as we would like to think. There are many lessons that we could learn from nature, which could apply very well to the business world. The natural balance that exists in nature is something rarely achieved in human systems. Despite occasional disturbances across the food chain, from plants to herbivores to small and then large carnivores, nature usually rebalances herself. It is only when humans interfere that nature loses control and falls out of balance. Could we learn from nature how to better manage our systems?

Once we have arrived at the concept that we are just creatures in a wider, balanced environment, the metaphor quickly extends. What type of character am I? Am I just prey or something more noble like a plant? How can we work more in harmony with each other and the wider environment? How do we win the struggle to avoid extinction through the ravenous actions of a bunch of enthusiastic predators?The successful species make the world work for them rather than being dictated to by others.

You have several choices as to how to act on the contents of this book:

1. Be sensible and establish a structured safari on your own terms.

Understanding the creatures in the Zoo and your own characteristics provides you with great advantages. You can establish a strategy to deal with the other creatures and even manipulate your environment to maximize your own progress. We can learn how to develop into something more than just being energy content for larger predators. You may even decide that you can establish your own Zoo that contains only the creatures that are compatible with yourself.

2. Be less sensible and use the book only for entertainment.

You may be completely satisfied with your own characteristics and survival strategy and choose not to change anything. However, this does not mean that your reading time was wasted. Two reasons for this are:

(i) You had fun reading the book and now can have even more fun gossiping about management in terms that they may not understand, and

(ii) You have probably learned how to size up the competition better and confirmed your position in the Zoo.

You could even fantasize about which creature you want to transform into during your lunch break. Perhaps you can do this in meetings if you are bored and think you can get away with it. Most people will not notice, except when you really get into it and you give your game away through a distant look and huge grin.

3. Be highly intelligent and happy and do both 1 and 2.

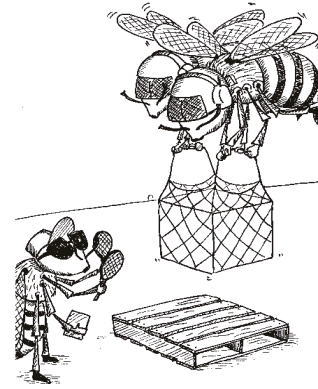
This just proves that you are a highly evolved but still adaptable creature and are bound to do very well. With this perspective, you can probably survive in many Zoos and maintain a well-balanced life. We need more like you on this planet, ideally spread among many Zoos to assist them in becoming more balanced. Go forth and multiply!

4. Do nothing.

This prompts the question of why you even bothered to read this at all. Maybe just to waste some time over a lazy break? Unfortunately, the world is full of creatures who gather much information and then complain about it as nothing ever comes out of knowing it. They constantly miss the point that information is beneficial only when it is applied to create a difference, action or value.

If we want to improve our circumstances, we need to use the information we have to make better decisions and drive actions. We watch traffic in order to decide the best time to cross the road. However, watching and deciding do not get us across. Ultimately, life is about experience and experience is about doing something!

B is for Bee



Characteristics:

Bees are the ultimate team workers. They share what they know to ensure that all benefit, and they aggressively defend the team as a whole. Bees, like ants, have a great work ethic and communicate well. However, unlike ants, they have far more complex ways to use shared knowledge to drive what they do. Rather than just act instinctively, they plan ahead and have many ways to protect the hive and communicate what they know to others for the benefit of the whole hive. Bees use different dances to tell other bees where food is located and release pheromones (chemical scents) to pass on other messages, such as the alarm signal if the hive is under attack.

Bees use their knowledge to control the environment to suit their purposes, rather than simply reacting to what happens to them. By doing this, they see through difficult times. Bees do not hibernate over winter. They manage the internal temperature of the hive by limiting the openings and actively flapping their wings to generate heat. They create additional honey in the summer to provide their energy requirements during their "lean periods," in effect planning ahead.. In summer they keep the hive cool by bringing water into the hive and allowing it to evaporate.

Bees have quite complex social structure, with separation of duties for the Queen, Drones, and Workers. The workers are all female and their duties are further divided based on their age. Young bees clean cells and care for the young and the Queen. In middle age they build, ventilate and maintain the hive and store the honey. The more experienced worker bees forage for food. Drones are there solely for reproduction, and many are required to maintain genetic diversity, but they are evicted if food is in short supply.

Bees have complex forms of protection in addition to their stingers. They build a specially constructed single opening to the hive, which is guarded by special attendants. They build their nests in hard to access places. They add floral herbicides and fungicides to the internal walls of the hive. They produce biocides, which they add to the honey to protect it from microbial spoilage, and they have a colony-specific odor, which allows them to identify each other and any intruders.

Relating to the Bee:

Bees are normally highly cooperative creatures. They help out their own hive members and even willingly help out other types of creatures, providing there is a two-way relationship. Bees provide honey and wax for others to use, and in return for this they get their hives moved around to plentiful sources of pollen and water by their human keepers. However, if they feel that they are under attack or they continue to be "used" in a one-way relationship they can get very nasty indeed. They can mount a particularly intimidating, painful counterattack.

"Human Bees" naturally form networks of people who have similar interests and want to collaborate for the good of the whole community (and across communities). Treat them with some respect and give them something back, and bees can make your Zoo a much more productive environment.

Human bees are highly productive, both directly (creating honey) and indirectly (pollinating flowers). But unhappy bees are unproductive and aggressive. Happy human bees cross-fertilize a whole range of other projects in the environment as they go about their work.

Bees relate very well to other collaborative and hardworking character types such as ants, mice, owls and some dogs. They highly respect the *Quercus robur* and eagles but have an aversion to lions, hyenas and rattlesnakes.

Interestingly, bees don't think too much about themselves. They think more of the community and the role they play in it. Other creatures see bees as positive contributors but are generally wary of them because of their potential aggressiveness if their work is disturbed in any way.

Success for the Bee:

Sharing knowledge with others so that maximum benefit can be generated for the entire community. Their ultimate success is the creation of a new colony by virtue of being successful enough to be able to support the development of a new Queen who will take over the existing hive (as the old Queen will migrate to a new location with enough loyal supporters to make a new hive). Short-term successes such as surviving another winter are not considered successes; they are just another step on a longer term successful journey.

Attributes often applied to the Bee:

Busy, Hardworking, Collaborative, Communicative, Communal, Sociable, Organised, Territorial, Intelligent, Knowledgeable, Loyal, Caring, Aggressive (when threatened).

Attributes not often applied to Bees:

Self-aware, Individualistic, Gullible, Political, Slow, Reflective.

L is for Lion

Characteristics:

Lions are aggressive and powerful leaders. They rule the pride with an iron paw and immediately and aggressively ward off any challengers. They protect their pride with energy and vigor. In return, all in the pride are subservient to the lion.



Lions declare themselves king of the Zoo, but this is not always reality. They usually just reign as the temporary king of their pride. Challengers are always waiting in the wings in this highly competitive environment. The balance of power is always at risk, being maintained by fear and physical strength. On the day the lion appears vulnerable, a succession challenge is likely. A more youthful lion, if successful, will then rule in the same way until the cycle repeats itself. The first thing a new king does is eat the younger male members of the newly conquered pride to ensure that their own reign lasts longer.

Young male offspring are tolerated in the pride only until they start to become strong enough to be a threat to the lion. They are ejected before they have the confidence to attempt a challenge. These young lions then roam alone or with siblings looking to be new kings in the pride of an aging lion.

As the king, they have others (primarily the lionesses) do much of the hard work for them, but the lion will always feast on a kill first while the rest of the pride wait to feed on the leftovers.

Relating to the Lion:

The lion is a force to be reckoned with. They are powerful, fast and agile beasts very aggressive if you are in their territory. They have a small army of loyal pride members they can rely upon to ambush you, and they will not hesitate to do so. This is not out of cruelty. It is just daily business to them, and they do it very well. They are not interested in outsiders joining their pride. They prefer to develop their own members from within.

Be wary of lions and always know where they are and what they are up to (even if you are one yourself). Never put yourself in a vulnerable position with them. If you happen to be unlucky enough to get landed into such a position, prepare as best as you can for an attack and get your sorry butt out of there as quickly as possible.

Lions are great to have in the right places in your Zoo, but they can also be dangerous. In the competitive corporate world, they are essential to fend off challenges from competitors and to command respect from your commercial teams. You just need to be sure they understand who the real competitors are. They sometimes spend more time competing with other lions within your own Zoo, than they do attacking lions from elsewhere.

Lions see themselves as powerful fearful creatures and so do most other creatures around them.

Success for the Lion:

Being in charge and feared. Defeating a challenger.

Attributes often applied to the Lion:

Strong, Powerful, Aggressive, Controlling, Lazy, Self-interested, Territorial, Manipulative, Confident.

Attributes not often applied to Lions:

Dedicated, Hardworking, Caring, Shy.



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Glossary

Pre-publication Testimonials

"A fresh approach to organisational culture development"

Steve Denning, author of *A Leader's Guide To Storytelling*, adviser to organizations worldwide on knowledge management and organizational storytelling and former Program Director, Knowledge Management, at the World Bank.

An excellent resource. In my 25 years consulting I have been in many organisational zoos!! Arthur's fun approach to understanding the personalities in the workplace is unique and engaging. Beware the animals.

Rod Dilnut Principle, William Bethwey & Associates

"Disarmingly simple; chillingly accurate; creates a compelling typology of business jungle inhabitants."

Dr Kate Andrews Partner, Intellectual Capital, BDO Kendalls

"Read the book over the weekend and enjoyed it. Love those insects! And the difference between the Lion CEO and his Eagle counterpart. Also liked the way the book in the end was an exhortation for people to develop some self-knowledge. I suspect it will be a winner".

Leon Gettler Senior Business Journalist, The Age Newspaper Melbourne

"How often do we fail to take into account the highly variable human element when we seek to interact? The Organisational Zoo offers a fun way to do this, and to understand the way we interact by using metaphors from the animal kingdom that shed new light on our behaviours and styles in a short space of time. With simplicity, engagement and effect, I believe this book has enormous potential wherever the effective interaction of people is paramount."

Frank Connolly Victorian Public Service Continuous Improvement Coordinator
Victorian State Services Authority


This book has tremendous potential to be used in all types of organisations large and small. Having a tool that people can use to identify themselves or others in a non-threatening way helps to break down many barriers that exist around cultural and behavioural issues. Hey, let loose and have some fun with it!

Linda Page Project Director Knowledge Management, Strategic Management Division
Victorian Department of Treasury & Finance

BusinessRelationships/SelfHelp \$19.95


"This witty and thought-provoking book makes ideal reading for students and management... I will be using this as a management text as well as recommending it as light reading."
- Professor **Derek Walker**, Graduate School of Business, RMIT University, Melbourne, Australia

Understand the Jackals, Whales, Kids and Rattlesnakes You Work Among


 When you think of your organization as containing ants, bees, chameleons, and other creatures on through the alphabet, your work world becomes more manageable. Discover the secret strengths and weaknesses of each distinct animal so that you can communicate more productively – or manipulate more cunningly. Your choicel


As you begin recognizing the animal nature of your colleagues, you will be learning how to:

- Understand coworkers, bosses and employees who drive you crazy
- Use metaphors to head off conflicts and build relationships
- Improve the atmosphere of your working environment
- Build teams with a productive mix of behaviors
- Influence seemingly unmanageable personality types
- Escape from the ill-meaning predators around you
- Assess and benefit from diversity in your organization
- Develop positive strategies to address disagreements
- Have more fun with work colleagues and the friends you complain to



"A fresh approach to organizational culture development."
- **Steve Denning**, Author of *A Leader's Guide To Storytelling*, Consultant and Former KM Program Director of the World Bank

 **Arthur Shelley** is a scientist who has worked for 25 years in manufacturing and research. His experiences in international change projects and building virtual teams have honed his awareness of both productive and destructive human behaviors. He lives with his wife and two daughters in Melbourne, Australia.



The Organizational Zoo is a refreshing and highly entertaining contribution to the sombre discipline of organisational behaviour. For those wanting to enhance their self awareness and find a humorous way to decipher the 'humanness' around them, this book will provide the insight they are seeking. Having taught many of the creatures at a tertiary level, I now have validation that the truly successful ones were those who found their natural habitats.+

Valerie Panayiotou, BAppSc, M.D. Organisational Effectiveness Consulting Pty. Ltd.

"One of those thoroughly enjoyable books you can pick up at anytime, open anywhere and instantaneously relate to your working world"

Graeme Allan, Director, Seifen Consulting Pty Ltd

This witty and thought provoking book makes ideal reading for students of the many courses available in management as well. The book outlines characters inhabiting what Shelley calls the 'organisational zoo'. People are characterised as various animals moving from A to Z. He shows great insight and wit and one of the valuable features of this book is that through the animal metaphor he makes it easier for us to recognise some of the motivations of our co-workers, clients, and those we depend upon. My own perspective on this book is coloured by my project management experience. I can see how viewing project stakeholders as well as the many team members we interact with as various animal species helps make sense of organisational cultures and a given situation's ethos. The book also has several appendices, one with a management game that can be both fun and instructive. I will be using this as a management text as well as recommending it as light reading.

Professor Derek Walker, Graduate School of Business, RMIT University, Melbourne

This book has something for everyone; for some it will be a lot of fun while for others it will be a didactic window into the workings of organisations. Most of us at some time have played a private game of matching people we know with members of the animal kingdom. However, Arthur Shelley has very skilfully taken this game and applied it to an organisational setting. With this book we can still play our little games, but the author has given us an excellent and expansive framework with which to play. From a bit of fun has come a very useful and insightful book for the work place.

Dr. Hilton Deeth, University of Queensland

"I can vividly imagine the whole thing coming together....how to successfully utilise each person's strengths to get a productive outcome. You don't try to change the natures of these beasts but rather accept them for who they've become or chosen to be, and then work within that paradigm."

David Hyde, Business Consultant.

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