

GETTING EVEN

The Truth About Workplace Revenge—and How to Stop It

By Thomas M. Tripp and Robert J. Bies

Jossey-Bass, \$27.95

Getting Even is not about actually getting even—though anyone reading this guide to preventing revenge will certainly discover inspiring ways to settle the score. Retaliation, after all, can feel good. But it's not good for your organization. While the authors point out that most vengeful acts in the workplace are nonviolent, even petty behavior like badmouthing a boss or giving the silent treatment can ruin overall morale and productivity. Workers don't seek payback for payback's sake. Their retributions are really their means to establish justice. "More employees than you'd think are vigilantes-in-waiting," write Tripp and Bies.

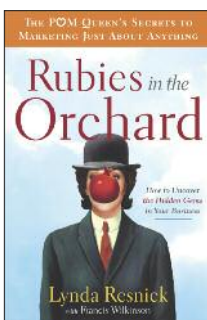
In some ways, *Getting Even* resembles HR advice books you've avoided. Here are two management professors telling you what you already know: Respect—or disrespect—your workers and they'll do the same to you. Indeed, Tripp and Bies' goal is to help you identify your own behavior that might incite vengeance rather than helping you spot possibly vengeful employees. However, the authors also delve into psychological research and concepts of organizational justice to explain the offenses likeliest to provoke revenge and the role that corporate structure plays. Tripp and Bies even develop a model of how thoughts and behaviors evolve from the beginning to the end of a conflict.

And just as *Getting Even* isn't intended to serve as a manual for the vengeful, it's not entirely about revenge either. It's also about forgiveness—but, fortunately, not in the "you must forgive so that you can move on" approach you'd find on Oprah or Dr. Phil's shows. Instead, Tripp and Bies deserve credit for grounding their book in realism and recognizing that revenge (and forgiveness) is fraught with complex human emotions. Thankfully, *Getting Even's* main objective is to help you get even better managing them. —Vadim Liberman

RUBIES IN THE ORCHARD

How to Uncover the Hidden Gems in Your Business

By Lynda Resnick with Francis Wilkinson
Doubleday, \$24.95



Effective marketing begins with having something worthwhile to sell, says Resnick, who urges marketers to locate "the intrinsic value of the product

or service" in question. Of course, it doesn't hurt to have a great idea for that product or service to start with, which is where POM—the now-ubiquitous pomegranate juice drink—comes in. The author gives over a good-sized chunk of *Rubies* to her adventures as "the POM Queen," focusing less on ledger figures than on colorful anecdotes

of obstacles faced and usually overcome: "Pomegranates are hard to open, and when they splatter—well, who has that many raincoats?"

It's a compelling narrative, albeit one somewhat less applicable to other products and marketing than Resnick might imagine. So it helps that she spends time on her other biggest projects—Teleflora, FIJI water, and the Franklin Mint—and gives us some autobiography as well, including a provocative aside about her role in the Pentagon Papers scandal. Resnick is a charming narrator, irrepressible but never quite overbearing, earnest without being tiresome. "I just loved advertising—I still do," she gushes while recounting early assignments, and we believe her. She's entirely sincere when lambasting marketers for lacking authenticity, which is why her gleeful story about buying Jackie Kennedy's famous \$35 necklace of fake pearls (for \$211,000) and selling Franklin Mint knockoffs—in other words, fakes of a

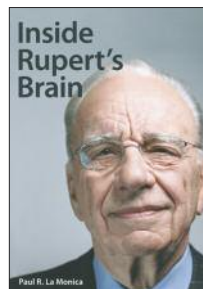
fake—will raise more than a few eyebrows. Still, there's plenty in *Rubies* to hold anyone's interest and attention, and the book itself serves as an effective ad for the merits of POM. —Matthew Budman

INSIDE RUPERT'S BRAIN

By Paul R. La Monica
Portfolio, \$24.95

If you've ever wondered, "What was he thinking?" about the media's most famous—and infamous—mogul, *Inside Rupert's Brain* won't necessarily answer

your question. La Monica's book doesn't probe Rupert Murdoch's mind so much as it does the minds of co-workers, rivals, business reporters, and others engulfed



by Murdoch's world. Nonetheless, short of having your own conversation with the tycoon, this is as close as you'll get to where the title promises.

For anyone who's followed Murdoch's adventures, or misadventures, there's little new here. For everyone else, it's all here. La Monica has compiled comments from all sorts of credible sources—including Barry Diller, Roger Ailes, and, of course, Murdoch himself—to provide a detailed snapshot of the mogul's major business acquisitions. It would've been easy for La Monica, who is editor-at-large at CNNMoney.com, to string along comments to portray Murdoch as a ruthless emperor gobbling up media outlets in his quest to reign as the media world's Big Brother. Indeed, La Monica essentially does just that. But he also transcends the usual villainous caricature. "The demonization of Murdoch in the mainstream press can be extreme," La Monica writes. "But it is clear that News Corp. would not and could not be as successful as it is if Murdoch rules the empire with absolute autocratic power."

By including observations from those who praise and those who criticize Murdoch, La Monica ends up telling, well, a fair and balanced story. He also doesn't allow *Inside Rupert's Brain* to devolve into psychoanalysis, keeping this primarily a business book, since Murdoch's business deals are interesting enough. If only the same could be said about La Monica's writing style—a little *New York Post* would have been welcome. —V.L.

THE TRUTH ABOUT MIDDLE MANAGERS

Who They Are, How They Work,
Why They Matter

By Paul Osterman
Harvard Business Press, \$35.00

Ah, middle managers—bane of cost-cutters, target of consultancies, and,

according to Osterman, "the glue that hold organizations together." In this slim but highly useful book, the MIT professor sets out "to describe what has happened to middle managers as firms restructure," and along the way, rehabilitate a group of people generally "seen as wasteful overhead." In truth, he argues, "taken as a group, middle managers have as much to say about organizational success or failure as do those at the top."

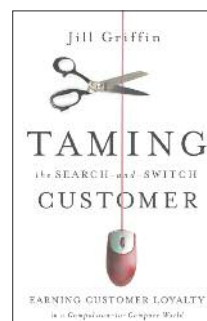
Osterman crunches data to gauge exactly where middle managers stand in today's companies—are they being systematically eliminated, or do they remain ensconced? He strikes a disinterested tone in noting that stress levels continue to rise as those in the middle take on increasing

responsibility while remaining under constant scrutiny. And, ominously, he offers a warning about people loyal to their work and direct co-workers but not to the larger organization, noting that "middle managers have lost their commitment to the firm as an enterprise and they are deeply suspicious of the motivations and actions of top management." —M.B.

TAMING THE SEARCH-AND-SWITCH CUSTOMER

Earning Customer Loyalty in a
Compulsion-to-Compare World
By Jill Griffin
Jossey-Bass, \$24.95

The "search-and-switch" customer has a "compulsion to compare" and uses a sense of "informedness" to subject purchases to a "Worth-It Test." In other



words, we're talking about a smart shopper who bases buying decisions on product attributes, price, user reviews, and a host of other criteria. This

isn't a new concept, of course, and no number of concocted words and phrases placed within quotations will fool you into thinking that Griffin reveals anything groundbreaking about consumer behavior.

The real strength of *Taming the Search-and-Switch Customer* is Griffin's use of case studies to illustrate how companies maintain brand loyalty. UPS, Facebook, Lexus, Charmin, Harley-Davidson, and KFC are just a few of the many—really, *many!*—businesses that Griffin highlights. These examples alone make this book worth skimming, for they are likelier than the author herself to offer insight into keeping customers.

Otherwise, Griffin spends many pages stating the obvious: We have many choices, there's lots of information online, product viewers are influential. While the book's main question—how do you maintain customer loyalty?—is also not novel (though if you knew the answer, you'd probably have written your own book by now), Griffin, sadly, doesn't offer a fresh response. Recommending that a company price a product correctly, effectively train front-line employees, and develop a unique selling proposition is Marketing 101. It's ironic that Griffin, who heads her own Austin, Texas-based consultancy, insists that companies must give customers a compelling reason to choose a brand but offers no such incentive for reading her book. —V.L.