



## Stanford eCorner

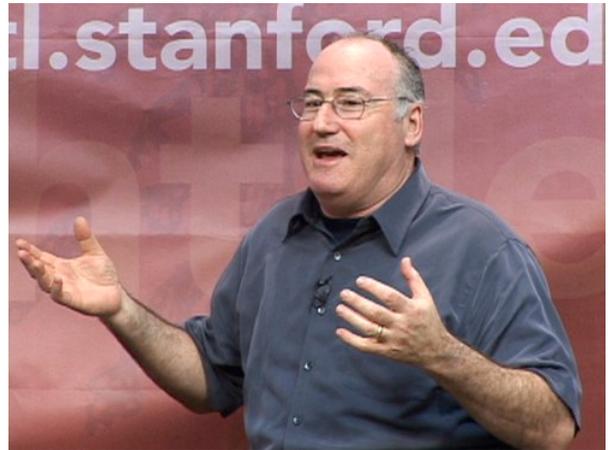
### Institutionalized Jerks

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Video URL: <http://ecorner.stanford.edu/videos/1742/Institutionalized-Jerks>

Sutton talks about different work places, such as law firms and hospitals, where there is a lot of jerk behavior among workers. He adds that there are some places where jerks are institutionalized. He notes, however, that there are other work places where being a jerk is inefficient.



#### Transcript

Are there other times at which being a jerk is institutionalized and is this associated with criminal behavior? I mean the second part to me is more like a high five. If you sort of read histories of Enron, I think that looks to me it might have been associated with criminal behavior but it might have just been independent, but I mean, certainly, and this was sort of Mike's earlier question which is a great question. I didn't answer it, like I said a linear or non-linear thing. There's sort of a continuum of companies. There's some I'm not actually going to name but, I'm thinking of, sort of like, law firms and hospitals and specially nasty places where it does tend to be institutionalized, specially, by the way, in surgical training there's a lot of nastiness. If you look at surveys of surgeons, that's one of the nastiest occupations around. And surgical nurses are amazing at how much grief they take. So there are some places more institutionalized but to me it's sort of a continuum. On one end you've got hospitals and some law firms I can think of. There's one law firm I worked with.

I won't use their name. I gave a talk there and when I went there, I thought they all hated me because in every interaction with them, somebody would insult me. I'm not kidding and finally I started watching them in interaction with one another and this was the norms in the law firm and since I've found about law firms. This law firm is especially famous for this kind of behavior. And towards I sense at beginning of my visit with them. This is to your point about being institutionalized the way you guys describe to me is we used to be a nice law firm where there was a balance between economics and humanity. Now, we're a mean law firm where it's all money all the time. So to me that sounds like it's institutionalized but then there's other organization I mentioned success factors. Google, I gave a version of, sort of like a more formal talk with Google and I kept pushing them. I said, "So what about this don't be evil thing?" And they said, "Well, you know we hope it last but this sort of place where it's just not efficient enough to be an asshole." So there is a range of possibility.