

Being nice much better for the bottom line

Want to get promoted? Try being nice. Astute employers are starting to recognise in this dog-eat-dog world, that it's the nice people who excel in customer service, are better problem-solvers and help build the team.

Their empathy helps them become more attuned to the needs of others, therefore creating workplace harmony. Employees who choose to be nice are using one of the most powerful tools towards getting them notices, for all the right reasons.

Nice, however, does not mean passivity, powerlessness or weakness.

It achieves outcome through assertiveness, not through demeaning or humiliating communication. Nice still speaks the truth and focuses on complex issues, but with kindness. Nice requires leadership and courage.

But as simple as it sounds, being nice does take effort. Making eye contact with sincerity, actively listening, offering a kind word or making a thoughtful gesture – these don't come easily to everyone.

Practising niceness each day is what gets people noticed. Even one determined effort to communicate niceness at an interview increases a job candidate's "likability" factor and may build valuable rapport with the interviewer.

Linda Kaplan Thaler and Robin Doval are CEO and president of the Kaplan Thaler Group, ranked as one of the fastest growing advertising agencies in the U.S.

These two communicators, who have co-authored a book *The Power of Nice*, attribute much of their success to following a simple but powerful philosophy – it pays to be nice.

They dispel an old workplace myth – that if you are having a good time at the office you must be wasting time.

They insist that happy employees are better for the bottom line. Not only are cheerful employees more productive, but cheerful employees also make customers happy, and happy customers buy more.

The saying "nice guys finish last" may have been true once, but is no longer.

With higher staff turnover, employees simply will not put up with aggressive behaviour they once endured.

If employees feel they are being used and abused, they leave.

Manager of Self Insurers of South Australia (Worker's Compensation) Robin Shaw, confirms bullying and aggressive behaviour is not being tolerated in the workplace.

“This type of behaviour is becoming as outdated as drinking and smoking in the workplace,” he says.

“The workplace bully causes havoc and the money spent on HR specialists, staff exits/turnovers, legal fees and WorkCover claims to repair the damage can go into millions of dollars – a serious danger for any business.”

A qualified worker with a record of high achievement may seem an ideal fit for a job position, but if they are authoritative and unkind there will be conflict.

Employers do well to hire candidates who exhibit kindness and empathy as part of their inter-personal skills repertoire.

Being nice is not a new concept. What is new is that employers are increasingly seeing niceness as a most valuable attribute: worth its weight in gold.

Nice people are becoming the real power-brokers.