

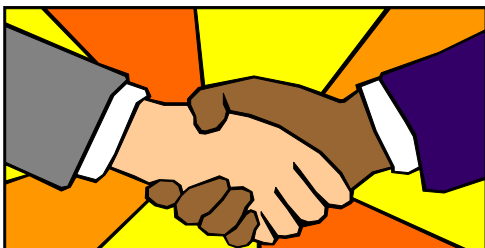
Just Gimme a Little...

One of the things we consultant-types do is try to boil down a plethora of issues, challenges and needs into common denominators. We try to group things under headings to organize our approach and prioritize tasks.

For many years, we have advocated the theory that communication is at the root of every good or bad result, depending on the effort given to it. We stand by this conviction, but have been rankled by an element that modifies the quality of communication: **RESPECT**.

Face it: we can all do a lot better. We share space on the road, in the office and at stores and restaurants every day with people who need and are entitled to respect. We all want to stay the execution of disapproval. The umbrella of respect includes a predisposition to:

- Reserve judgment (keep your critical yap shut)
- Acknowledge others ("Good Morning" is a nice place to start—even with strangers!)
- Assume equality (The ill-attired are not stupid; the less educated do not lack greatness, etc.)
- Abandon ego (Inflation is only good in tires and balloons)
- Offer assistance (What? Nobody needs a helping hand?)
- Be mannerly (Modeling the behavior du jour lowers you in the eyes of others; high standards, on the other hand, inspire respect)
- Respond promptly (Your time is no more important than anyone else's)
- Skip the excuses and take ownership (Nobody is perfect)
- Begin with optimism (Nothing is impossible)



- Consideration for others (Tape yourself opining—how does it come across?)
- Suppress pettiness (Little stabs and vindictive acts are for losers)

Bestow or Begrudge

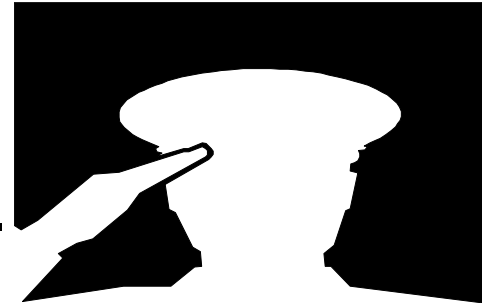
In the past, we have been taught that respect is earned, not given. Thinking about it, that is like saying "guilty until proven innocent". Perhaps the opposite approach would entice more people to act with respect if it were first accorded to them, without condition. It seems that offering respect up front would be a very powerful M.O. It would convey that everyone is worthy until they do something to become less so. Could this be a ground-breaking way for leaders to stop the bleeding of turnover, absenteeism, grievances and the other blights of unhappy workers? To change the prevalent paradigm that espouses "You aren't of or at my level so unless you impress, I am unimpressed"? Just maybe so. What could possibly be the downside?

A Rule of Respect

We are always looking for ways to convince people at work to remember they are people. Leaders, especially. They have really important and heavy responsibilities, chief among them the people they lead. They need to practice and then reinforce—like always—the behaviors they expect. There are many excellent leadership programs out there, but they are a hard sell because they often include a peer feedback process and people fear criticism. Would it not be simpler to implement a Rule of Respect and then build on it? If workers were soldiers, would their behaviors in combat cost lives or save them? Could you depend on your colleagues to save your life when in peril?

Diagnosis

When we see fractured operations—groups with people held down by fear or by inferior leadership—we have come to the conclusion that a general lack of respect is at the foundation. When people are not required to act with deference, esteem, honor, politeness, courtesy, regard and value toward others, there is a breakdown in every element of work: quality, quantity, service, commitment, survival. Apathy and/or ignorance are lethal.



Consequences

The obvious consequences of inconsistent respect have been well-documented. The antithesis of respect—disrespect—is stress. "The fallout from the growing ranks of "disengaged" workers is 150 million more work days a year than those workers who feel valued and are committed to their jobs. The drag on the economy from lost productivity is almost \$300 billion per year, an amount roughly equal the nation's defense budget" (*Business Week*).

Consequences are needed if rules are in place. If there are disrespectful people or people doing disrespectful things in a company, it means that the rules, whatever they may be, don't exist for them, because there is no reprisal for refusal to honor them. As you know, sour grapes don't keep to themselves, and the whole bunch begins to rot.

Penalties aside, there is no reason to wait for the top dogs to change the rules before making personal changes within the realm of people with whom you work. We guarantee it will be a better, happier place, even if limited to a few.
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Edited by Denise Dollard



The difference Between Laziness and Disrespect is this: a Lazy person doesn't care about his or her work; a Disrespectful one doesn't give a flying fig about yours, either.

We worked with a woman we'll call Mabel whose grammar and spelling was atrocious. It might have been less egregious if she wasn't in a manager's position, but sadly, Mabel's emails both amazed and amused recipients. On its own, this was pure laziness. It became disrespect as soon as she blamed other people, cited erroneous facts and cast aspersions.

Arthur would not type anything unless it was in all capital letters because it was easier than using the shift key. No paragraphs, either. He's just lazy; doing the bare minimum and going on to the next task. In both cases, their lack of

attention to quality calls into question their ability to do their jobs well. Worse, should their correspondence ever become evidence in a legal action, it makes the company look unprofessional and inept for allowing such schlocky work. Simple laziness is embarrassing: it tarnishes the leaders who allow it.

At its core, Disrespect is the lack of care or consideration for others. Usually directed at the peer or subordinate level, it includes unreturned phone calls, ignored emails, interrupting another's comments, not following up, failing to accept responsibility., etc. These actions scream "You are not important enough!", "I am better", "You have less power than me", etc.

Assign an "L" for laziness AND/or "D" for disrespect to the actions below. Decide which is which and then compare your

results with your contemporaries.

1. Ask for information you already have because it is easier to ask than to find.
2. Show up late and/or unprepared—because you can get away with it.
3. Badmouth the entire company but happily accept your paycheck.
4. Let someone else get the paper for the printer or answer the phone.
5. Press "Send" before "Spell Check".
6. Fail to thank *everyone* who does anything for you.
7. Surf the Internet while others work, even when your own work is done.
8. Go on the offensive when you have let a task linger by finding something wrong about another's efforts.
9. Don't use your turn signal to change lanes.
10. Take the last cup of coffee and don't turn the burner off.

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BIG DESK / LITTLE CUBE:

(a look at the varied perspectives of managers and employees)

The Tardy Employee

Louise rarely got to work on time—indeed, if she did, she'd lucked out behind an ambulance with the same destination or mistook the 5 for a 6 on her clock. Upon arrival, Louise was forever in a frenzied flurry to minimize the minutes that had already ticked beyond her appointed start time. After all, who would really begrudge a girl 3 minutes? Sometimes with still-wet hair, or sometimes carrying her makeup, she tried but couldn't quite get to work in one calm, completed piece—on time.

Louise was paid by the hour, and thought nothing of rounding down to start time.



Louise was finally counseled and then formally disciplined for her tardiness. It was half-hearted, because she really did good work when she was there, so it was pretty easy to overlook the occasional lapse even after she started to improve.

Eventually, she started staying later to make up for the time she missed in the morning, but still didn't show up on time with regularity. Is this okay? Does it solve the problem?

No. While Louise is now at least working her full shift, what about others who might prefer a change in schedule? Can they all be accommodated? Probably not. Even more important, though, the wrongful behavior has not changed, and may now be construed as being acceptable.

We once employed a temp who, like Louise, had a million great reasons that he couldn't get his butt to his desk by 8:00 AM. Two minutes late, seven minutes late, it didn't matter. He marked his timecard with

8:00. We fired him. Why? He was LYING and STEALING. He claimed to have worked when he didn't. Should employees be treated the same way as temps? Yes.

Little Cube Dwellers:

If you fudge *only 10 minutes a week*, you are cheating your company out of 8.33 hours—more than a full day's work every year. Multiply that times everyone there. Doesn't sound like much when Hilda always calls in sick, but Hilda isn't your concern. You do NOT deserve to slough off just because someone else does. If you want to keep your job and get an occasional raise, get your derriere in your chair a few minutes EARLY. People will notice—guaranteed.

Big Desk Honchos:

Is it so hard to apply the rules to everyone? We know good help is hard to find, but good help with bad habits causes the other help to either resent or repeat the offense. What's good for the goose is good for the gander, yes?

Believe this one thing: if you follow through and act upon rule breakers, the incidents of rule breaking will diminish across the board. You may have to sacrifice your Louise for the greater good, but the message will be crystal clear to everyone else that the rules (and your backbone) are not rubber.

* * * * *

Light Touches

Service Extras That Linger Long After the Experience

On January 2nd, the car wouldn't start. The dog had puked in bed overnight. The power was out. Missed the first day of work in the Happy New Year.

After getting a jump from the tow truck, got the car to the dealer for a diagnosis. Said dog had puked several more times (always on carpeting) in the meantime. Stranded at home, but busy with the bucket, received a call informing of various auto ailments totaling \$1100; because parts had to be ordered, the car would not be ready until the next day. At least the dealer offered a car. Hitched a ride back there with the neighbor.

Dealer asks why I am there. They don't give loaners, you see: they would spring for a rental. **Enterprise Rent-A-Car** picks you up...eventually.

Got the new guy—first day on the job. Terrific. He and the three others helping

him through his first rental made 2008 seem likely to happen first.

Then, a perky young woman at the Enterprise counter looked at me and enthusiastically asked, "So, how is your new year going so far?" I replied, "Great. My car died and my dog is hurling all over the house. Had a power outage and found out I have to shell out a bundle for my car, which won't be ready till tomorrow."

Her response surprised me and elevated my mood. She said, "Good for you! You're getting it all out of the way right at the start!" This stopped me. I had to smile in admiration of her positive outlook. She changed the day.

Later that night, she called to ask me how it was going. I told her how much I appreciated her optimism and follow up. The dog is now fine and I am still impressed. Thanks, Enterprise. * * * * *

pArticle Piques

Irksome iotas that cost: Screw the Customer!

Screw the Customer! would make for a really fun board game in which the person who can drive the most clients away wins.

When the game is invented, we have the following submission for the round called "The Return".

The first thing you should know about returning something at **The Home Depot** is that you will need wear comfortable shoes, pack a lunch and bring a book. Do NOT go during daylight hours, any time on a weekend, or if you have plans the next day.

Thus prepared, our mission entailed obtaining a missing hinge from a storage cabinet purchased earlier. At the get-go, we were greeted with a handwritten sign that read, "Customer Refund/Exchange Desk Closed!"

Undeterred, we trotted to the Customer Service Desk, where things like special orders and unclaimed children are handled. A harried person was loudly informing the

madding crowd that they would NOT be accepting returns. Then, one by one, we were asked to tell the reason we were in line. It was like Judge Judy with a hammer. Anyway, since we were of the missing-not-returning genre, we were given the dispensation to stay in line. Lucky us.

Turns out the reason for no returns was that the store was doing inventory—for three days—and didn't want to mess up their numbers with something being snuck back onto a shelf.

When our turn finally arrived and we explained the predicament, we were promptly sent away to see a guy in Plumbing (they allegedly handle Storage). The guy we were helped by was not wearing the usual orange apron. His explanation: "My boss doesn't want me to get sidetracked by customers. Oh, and who told you I handled Storage? I do Plumbing!"

After 56 minutes, three other employees and two Advil, we had our hinge. They lost our future business.

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Bright Ideas

Inventions and Improvements

Aside from the lobotomies and personality transplants that we all wish upon certain others, there are still lots of opportunities to make life at work and at home a little better.

Revolutionary ideas that would definitely improve life: ❶ Clear English by call center operators; ❷ Mistake O-Meters: devices that apply logic to thought and that beep when the decision will wreak havoc; ❸ ONE cable or cord for all computer and TV functions...in purple.

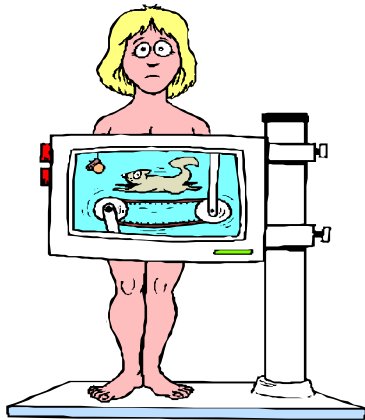
At work, there is much complacency directed to doing things the way they were always done. Rarely are people encouraged to conjure better, easier ways to do things, and almost never are they rewarded if they do. Still, this should not change each and every one's quest to seek improvement or to follow through on ideas.

We find that simply discussing issues and realities with team members is incredibly helpful. Sometimes an odd comment or a wistful "if only" leads to cost-cutting, time-saving, morale-building results. We can't tell you how many times this has improved projects on which we have worked.

Here's some starters:

- Ask what is wrong with current procedures.
- Solicit what would be easier, faster or better.
- Inquire—"If you were me, how would you..."
- Consider what customers would prefer. Don't know? Better ask.
- What do other companies do?
- If you could change 3 to 5 things, what would they be and who benefits?
- Does everyone know WHY we do what we do? If not, explanations are necessary.

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Angie's List

If you haven't heard about it and need any sort of work done, you must check out Angies-List.com. Essentially, it is a feedback-based website that provides A to F grades supplied by paid members for work performed by roofers, florists, electricians, babysitters, handymen—over 250 categories of trades people. There is a database for almost every major American city. Annie's List has been featured in publications such as US News and World Report, The Washington Post, The Los Angeles Times and Consumer Reports, and has been likened as the "Zagats of Home Improvement". For about \$6 per month (cheaper by the year), you can read all about people or companies you might consider hiring for large or small projects. We joined and were able to find several highly recommended flooring installers and chimney sweeps, to name a few. Truly, it is a lot cheaper and definitely less hassle than a lawsuit. An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure, and the website is very well designed, with links to the Better Business Bureau. Good for you, Angie!

Insider Insights
Thoughts and News Items We Felt Like Sharing

WARNING: Objects in the Mirror Are Closer Than They Appear

Truly, if we had wanted a fun-house mirror to make things look smaller, we would have put in in the bathroom, not the right side of our cars. We don't understand why this phenomenon has permeated the auto industry, but it has.

After a good deal of Googling, we found a blog with a plausible explanation: the mirror is curved so that a driver can see a wider array of the road and its inhabitants, and potentially be able to avert disaster. We're not convinced for this simple reason: while one is reading the message, they are not really looking at all of those little things that are actually big things that will kill you if you don't hit the gas. Meanwhile, you have ignored the expanse of windshield for a few seconds and you wind up rear-ending someone. Of course, this is just our opinion, but even the Department of Transportation could not offer up a convincing reason.

Thank You!

Your feedback about our article *The Difference Between Honesty and Integrity* (First Quarter 2006) was much appreciated. Thanks to all of you who took the time to write or call.

Unless we are wrong, the thing that resonated about that article was the real-life example used. In that vein, we offer up *The Difference Between Disrespect and Laziness* in this issue. Please let us know what you think or share any ideas that would help us make Light pArticles better.

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Beacon Bits

Quotations to cast rays of humanity across everyday business life

"If you want to see a change for the better, you have to take things into your own hands."
 - Clint Eastwood

"The respect of those you respect is worth more than the applause of the multitude."
 - Arnold Glasgow

"What people say behind your back is your standing in the community."
 - Ed Howe

"Study without reflection is a waste of time; reflection without study is dangerous."
 - Confucius

"Pay your people the least possible and you'll get from them the same."
 - Malcolm Forbes

**Last Laughs:
 Evaluation Excerpts**

Received in an email and rumored as actual quotes from government performance reviews, we wanted to share these gems. Know anyone who fits?

"When he opens his mouth, it seems that it is only to change feet."

"This employee is depriving a village somewhere of an idiot."

"He would argue with a signpost."

"When her IQ reaches 50, she should sell."

"If you see two people talking and one looks bored, he's the other one."

"One neuron short of a synapse."

"Some drink from the fountain of knowledge; he only gargled."

"This employee should go far, and the sooner he starts, the better."

"She brings a lot of joy whenever she leaves the room."

"The wheel is turning, but the hamster is dead."

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