

# PERSONNEL NOTEBOOK

*For Your Most Important Resource*

## DO WE NEED RULES FOR RUDENESS?

Communication plays an important part in your life every day. It's a tool, a skill, and an art. When you communicate, you deliver a message, and, whether that message is positive or negative, how you deliver it will sometimes be more important than the original message.

If all the presents under your Christmas tree were wrapped in paper sacks instead of bright, cheerful, warm holiday wrapping, you would not be nearly as happy to see them. If they were wrapped in dirty laundry, you would likely avoid them altogether. Rudeness in any communication is like delivering your message in dirty laundry.

Common courtesy is not so common anymore. According to reports, rudeness is on the rise. We have all had difficult moments when we acted discourteously or said something we later regretted. Addressing the incident and apologizing can heal those wounds. Rudeness, however, seems to be creating a second language in today's world, and it's carrying over into the workplace.

### **Escalating Rudeness**

In a University of North Carolina study, "Workplace Incivility: The Target's eye View," 1,400 employees surveyed said their boss or

their coworkers were getting ruder by the year. The majority —78 percent of them — said incivility has gotten worse over the last 10-years. Those surveyed also said that rude people are more likely to be in higher positions than those on the receiving end of the nasty behavior.

Lack of manners does affect a company's productivity. Twelve percent of the participants said they had quit a job to avoid a rude boss or coworker, and more than half said they lost work time avoiding rude people. Employers were stunned to find that *22 percent of the participants said they deliberately slowed down or delayed their work effort in response to rude treatment.* That definitely affects customers!

Being polite, saying "please" and "thank you," and waiting our turn are social graces that are usually taught to us as children. They are not just childhood niceties. They are life skills. You can get through life without social graces, but rudeness doesn't have to be part of your world or your workplace. Research from the American Management Association (AMA) shows that *it takes a person twice as long to understand a sentence stated in a negative manner as it does for them to understand the same information*

*stated in a positive tone.* Apparently, it's in our DNA.

So, do we need to have rules rudeness? I think we do and they should look something like this.

## **RULES FOR RUDENESS**

1. **All company communications will be courteous.** This includes phone calls, letters, e-mails, memos, meetings, and conversations. Even bad news will be delivered in a positive manner.
2. **Respectful behavior is the only acceptable behavior.** You don't have to agree with what is said, you can disagree respectfully. There are polite ways to end conversations. Bad news is bad enough. You don't have to destroy someone to communicate it to him or her.
3. **Listen when you are listening!** You may not be totally ignoring what's being said, but if the end result is a perception that what someone is saying isn't important, then that translates to rudeness.
4. **Give credit where it's due.** The more you can promote a positive work environment the more of a win-win it becomes. This simple shift in behavior may help you to retain good employees, increase productivity, and even improve morale.
5. **Encourage teamwork.** Rudeness makes it difficult for people to cooperate and collaborate. A well-managed team recognizes the contributions of everyone. You don't have to blow out the other person's light to make yours shine.
6. **Lead by example.** If you're the boss who screams, belittles, criticizes publicly or unfairly, and needs to have everyone hear

your tirades, you are probably the cause of low employee productivity and high turnover. Can you "play well with others?"

7. **Have some fun at work.** It won't make your place of business look less professional. Getting people to laugh together sets a better tone and eases workplace tensions. A joke a day, an occasional party, or finding the humor in any situation helps to ease the tension.

There are two other good reasons for supervisors to keep their communications civil and supportive:

- a. **Regulations** — The courts and OSHA are responding to charges regarding violence in the workplace. Intimidation from supervisors or coworkers can result in serious charges against the company *and* the guilty individual. Intimidation includes any act, verbal or physical, wherein employees feel coerced or bullied to the point that they reasonably feel fear for their safety. In some cases, this can be interpreted as a threat of violence. It can include yelling, using profanity, name calling, or verbal abuse. In cases of EEOC charges, a history of such behavior can be considered evidence of discrimination.
- b. **Unions** — Contrary to popular belief, unions do not usually form because workers are demanding more money or better benefits. Union organizers are looking for employees who are complaining about how they're treated, how much they dislike their supervisors, how they think the company feels about them, how they feel about the company, whether they feel they have any control over the work they do, or if they feel the company sees them as just strong backs with weak minds. Companies where employees feel disrespected are fertile grounds for the formation of unions. These are the things that unions look for and when

they find it, they see it as an invitation to come in.

As an employer, you don't need this kind of trouble, and avoiding it is not difficult. Remember, these are the people you have chosen to work with. Treat them .with respect and courtesy.

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**TOP 10 THINGS  
PEOPLE WANT IN THEIR JOBS**

- 1. WORK WITH PEOPLE WHO TREAT ME WITH RESPECT.**
- 2. INTERESTING WORK.**
- 3. RECOGNITION FOR GOOD WORK.**
- 4. FAMILY TIME CONSIDERATION.**
- 5. CHANCE TO DEVELOP SKILLS AND CAREER.**
- 6. WORKING FOR PEOPLE WHO LISTEN TO MY IDEAS ABOUT HOW TO DO THINGS BETTER.**
- 7. SEEING THE END RESULT OF MY WORK.**
- 8. WORKING FOR EFFICIENT, SUCCESSFUL MANAGERS.**
- 9. A JOB THAT IS NOT TOO EASY.**
- 10. FEEL WELL INFORMED ABOUT WHAT'S GOING ON.**

*PUBLIC AGENDA FOUNDATION*