



How to get ahead by being nice

It's not about being a doormat, writes Julie Earle-Levine

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HOLD the door for a colleague? Sucker! Buy your secretary flowers. Crawler! Laugh at a co-worker's joke to make him feel good? Weak! Such acts of kindness are considered by many as wimpy and passive. Many people believe that being nice in business won't get you anywhere.

Not so, according to the authors of a trio of new business books, that suggest being extraordinarily nice will actually bolster your career and presence at work.

The Power of Being Nice - How to Conquer the Business World with Kindness, by two advertising executives, Linda Kaplan Thaler and Robin Koval, is getting rave reviews, and creating buzz at Manhattan dinner parties where the conversation is often more about cutthroat behaviour and winning deals. According to the authors, being nice is not about being a doormat, rather, it is about being exceptionally tough.

While many companies encourage a dog-eat-dog mentality Kaplan Thaler and Koval believe you can succeed simply by being nice. They argue that nice people live

longer, are healthier and make more money.

"Our culture has helped to propagate the myth of social Darwinism - of survival of the fittest - that the cutthroat me versus you philosophy wins the day, but it completely contradicts the way we have run our business and our lives," says Kaplan Thaler.

Thaler and Koval run a large advertising agency with nearly \$US1 billion (\$1.28 billion) in billings and claim the company's success stems from a flowers and chocolates, rather than pitchforks and spears approach.

Being nice does not mean smiling blandly while others walk over you, but instead moving forward with confidence that comes from knowing that being very nice and placing other people's needs on the same level as your own will get you everything you want. This may take years but it will happen. Key themes include sharing the credit for a job well done, helping your enemies and complimenting the competition. The authors suggest also trying to model your behaviour on that of the person you would like to be, someone you admire.

Warriors, Workers, Whiners and Weasels, by another

advertising executive, Tim O'Leary, offers advice on how to recognise and deal with all those worker types in a firm, but pleasant way. He says the whiners, warriors and workers are usually more obvious in their behaviour than weasels. He mapped the book six years ago conceptually as a tool for his employees and it was published.

The first step is to identify the four worker types. Warriors are aggressive innovators, whiners are always negative and dissatisfied, workers are the dependable soldiers, and weasels are lazy, lack drive and have an extreme sense of entitlement.

"We all know each of these personality types. We live around them, work with them, admire some of them and have great disdain for others," said O'Leary, who is CEO of Respond2 Communications, whose clients include Fortune 500 companies America Online, Home Depot and Proctor & Gamble.

O'Leary recently started a blog (www.blog.warriorsandweasels.com) inviting people to report weasels and their behaviour, and has been inundated with responses. "It's not just the obvious culprits (that he says include Enron, WorldCom and Hewlett-Packard executives).

Some are sad, funny stories rather than earth shattering weasel behaviour. Some people are very concerned about their food being stolen from the office refrigerator, or it might be the annoying guy in the cube next to you playing the radio too loud, or who scratches your car in the parking lot."

O'Leary suggests being nice, with caveats. "You can be nice and still get the job done."

The book offers tips on communication, and the tools necessary to deal with issues including insecurity in its many forms, how to develop a weasel

radar and to make sure you yourself are not weaselly.

Donald Trump, the US property magnate, says he would always rather do a deal with people he likes, and who treat him well. He advocates being nice in business, but the timing, and specific circumstance are important. In his latest book, *Why We Want You To Be Rich*, co-authored with Robert Kiyosaki (author of *Rich Dad, Poor Dad*), Trump writes that life and business can be combative. "It can be a battle. But make sure you choose to fight the good fight - and get away from futile battles and

battlegrounds as quickly as possible."

The Power of Nice - www.thepowerofnice.com

Warriors, Workers, Whiners, and Weasels - <http://www.warriorsandweasels.com>

Why We Want You To Be Rich - www.amazon.com