

■ Civility At Work

20 Ways to Build a Kinder Workplace

by Tom Terez

It's not always easy being nice. There are deadlines to meet, conflicts to settle, resources to share, promotions to snag – all of which can pit people against each other. What to do? Here are 20 practical ideas. If you believe that workplaces work better when people get along, scan this list and start living it.

1. Say what you mean, and mean what you say. There's no substitute for authentic communication.
2. Be less inclined to give advice – and more inclined to seek it.
3. Resist the urge to jump to conclusions about people and their motives. Go to the source, get the facts, and then decide.
4. Identify the biggest redeeming quality of that person who's always driving you crazy. Keep it in mind the next time the two of you interact.
5. When greeting a colleague, skip the mindless how-ya-doin'. Ask a question that shows genuine interest.
6. Go out of your way to say thank you. Sincere appreciation is powerful stuff – it's feedback, recognition, and respect all wrapped in one.

7. If you're overdue in showing gratitude, make up for lost time. Contact everyone who's owed thanks from you, and let them know how much you appreciate their help.

8. When credit and compliments come your way, spread them around to all who helped. And if you think you're solely responsible for that honored achievement, think again.

9. Promise only what you can deliver. If what you deliver falls short, explain why.

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10. When things go wrong, resist the urge to assign blame. It's the system that usually fails, so fix the system, not the people.

11. Widen your social circle. If you always go to lunch with the same group, invite someone new.

12. Give a gift for no reason. If you work with nature lovers, order some plants or flowers. If the group has a chronic sweet tooth, get a few candy dishes and keep them full.

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13. When a rumor reaches your ear, let it go out the other.

14. Step down from the treadmill of daily tasks and have an inefficient chat with a colleague. If it's someone you rarely engage in conversation, all the better.

15. Show interest in someone else's interests. Okay, maybe you're not dying to hear about Pat's passion for stamp collecting, but Pat will be thrilled you asked.

16. When you take a stand and later realize it's the wrong stand, be honest enough to say so.

17. Involve more people in weighing options and making decisions. There's incredible brainpower all around you, so why not put it to work?

18. If you tend to send e-mails to colleagues who are an easy walk away, give the computer

a rest. Get up, walk over, and have a no-tech conversation.

19. Try going a whole day without making judgments about people. Good luck – it's tough!

20. Don't wait for kindness to come your way. Gandhi had it right: We must be the change we wish to see in the world.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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