

Empathy 101: Ten Commandments of Human Relations

These ten commandments of human relations aren't original to me, and I don't know the source. At the same time, they don't go out of style or out of date if you are in business. Everyone in your business must imbue their efforts with these commandments. They are required in every type of relationship be it marketing or selling to clients, providing customer support before or after the sale, working with and negotiating with vendors or your support team and of course internal to your organization.

These skills are not the sole domain of your designated human resource professional. In fact, they should be part of your company's Hedgehog Concept (ref: From Good to Great by Jim Collins, <http://www.jimcollins.com/lib/books.html>).

As the leader of your team, go through these commandments and consider how well you and everyone on your team abides by them. Encouraging their use just might smooth some ruffled feathers or diffuse a tense situation.

1) SPEAK TO PEOPLE

There is nothing like a cheerful word of greeting. To really connect, look them in the eye as you speak.

2) SMILE AT PEOPLE

It takes 72 muscles to frown, only 14 to smile. They can hear the difference in your voice - even over the phone.

3) CALL PEOPLE BY NAME

The sweetest music to anyone's ear is the sound of his/her own name. Be sure you say it correctly. Say it often.

4) BE FRIENDLY AND HELPFUL

To have friends and build relationships, be a friend first.

5) BE CORDIAL

Sincerely speak and act as if everything you do is a genuine pleasure.

6) BE GENUINELY INTERESTED IN PEOPLE

You can like almost everybody if you try. They don't care how much you know until they know how much you care. Be sure they know how much you care.

7) BE GENEROUS WITH PRAISE

Praise publicly, correct privately. Everyone wins this way.

8) BE CONSIDERATE

of the feelings of others. There are usually three sides to a controversy: yours, the other person's, and the right side. Keep ego and emotions in check.

9) BE ALERT

to give excellent service. What counts most is what we do for others not ourselves.

10) HAVE A GOOD SENSE OF HUMOR

Don't take yourself too seriously. When you add lots of patience, and humility, you will have a recipe for enduring success.

Do you think these are soft skills you can brush aside as non-critical? Think again. In this Conceptual Age, a deeper understanding of the subtleties of human interactions becomes not only important but imperative. In fact, at the Stanford Business School, students are flocking to one of the newer courses called "Interpersonal Dynamics". Be sure everyone on your team masters the basics.