



Treat Others with Professional Courtesy, as you would have them treat you...

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According to the Urban Dictionary, professional courtesy simply means a sort of mutual respect between people in the same type of work. You've probably heard of this in the context of physicians, attorneys or policemen affording their colleagues with professional courtesy; it is also a philosophy of how to behave in a workplace environment, a professional etiquette of sorts. And while professional courtesy is not required, it has been found to make the workplace more enjoyable, with a more connected and engaged workforce.

Today, there seems to be a lack of professional courtesy in the business workplace and many have written that the reasons (or excuses) for this are because of technology and people being too busy. Yes, technology has definitely reduced the amount of face to face communication and we are all being asked to do more with less. However, are these worthy reasons to treat people at the office as if they don't deserve respect and perhaps the benefit of the doubt? I say, absolutely not. It's rude in fact and at its worse, utterly dehumanizing.

Professional courtesy seems so simple to practice and I believe, it really is simple. Treat everyone with respect and honesty, (even if you don't particularly care for the person). The workplace is not the right venue for "high school mean girls", passive aggressive or bullying behaviors, rather it is a place where respectful, open and honest communication should occur. And yet, many businesses are riddled with these kinds of "dirty office politics" behaviors. Some people tout the importance of being treated with professional courtesy and yet they themselves do not treat others with same. And what about E-mail being used to discredit people rather than having an honest, direct and private conversation? The gossip mill is fueled by judgmental and snarky comments meant to hurt someone; but why? How much productivity and creativity is lost to businesses because of these kinds of behavior? And how do people on the short end of all this feel as they leave the office at the end of a work day? Happy, energized, engaged, fulfilled? Unlikely.

Who can fix this and how? You and me. It has to be us, because it is our problem to either solve, or live with. We can stand up for professional courtesy by being mindful of our own actions; listening attentively, not fueling gossip, being direct and polite, and remembering that a sincere thank you goes a long way. As leaders, we can mentor young professionals and hold our direct reports accountable for behaving with professional courtesy. Modelling this behavior and

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spreading the word whenever possible will go a long way to bringing back fundamental professional courtesy in our workplaces.