

THE SET FREE LIFE!

What's Stopping You?

Have you ever heard of the town of Ira, Vermont? I hadn't—until I read a story about its town treasurer who embezzled money. The town's entire annual budget is only \$212,000. Only 447 people live there. It doesn't even have a post office or a school.

But Don Hewitt wrote himself checks from funds for the cemetery. He noted his and others' property taxes as having been paid and then kept the money. Things like that add up: over a period of 32 years, Hewitt allegedly pocketed more than \$400,000.

That's a lot of money for that little hamlet. It's also about the same amount of money a medium-sized company can lose in a year over just half of its people experiencing one incident of rude, boorish, immature behavior from a coworker or superior. Just one per year! And then consider the research showing 48% of working Americans report they experience serious incivility on the job at least once per *week*.

Here's what Don Hewitt said when he was caught: "Everyone trusted me." He's facing 20 years in prison.

Here's what most backward-behaving, inconsiderate, arrogant employees say to themselves when no one calls them on their offensive conduct: "Nobody cares how I act as long as I make the company money." They face no consequences, usually because a superior is uncomfortable addressing poor behavior. "That's just the way Bill is," an executive may say when complaints reach his or her desk. "Everyone's got a different personality."

That may be true, but it doesn't address the incivilities that cause people to have to take a break to gather their emotions, or leave early because they are disturbed by an offender's actions, or call in a mental health day because they work with a jerk. You have valuable people, people who do great work and know how to act right, being targeted by a narcissist or a mannerless fool that you or your colleagues are afraid to confront—or just don't care about the toll it's taking.

If you're a manager with an employee who is a constant source of stress, I've got to ask: why do you put up with it? What is your payoff for allowing it to go on?

There are usually just three or four main reasons for the lack of action:

1. "I want to be fair. He/she does great work. I can't fire him/her just because of attitude." Yes you can. Let the person know that conduct—professional behavior—is an important part of your performance evaluation. Explain what you expect and contrast how what you're seeing isn't meeting your expectations. Ask the person if he/she has the will to change.
2. "I'm afraid we'll be sued if I terminate an employee for poor behavior." Everyone acknowledges we're litigation happy in this country, and because of it we often overstate the dangers of firing someone and end up not dealing with serious issues. Document bad behavior. Again, explain to the employee your expectations. Give them serious, definable warnings ("I need to see improvement by this date"). Speak with your HR department and find out exactly what the law requires so that you know how to address all points.
3. "Every time I speak with this employee, they are very apologetic and promise to change." So set a deadline. Look, people know they're getting away with stuff, and they know how to play you. Don't let them. This is not personal; this is business. If you spend only an hour a week dealing with the effects of this person's behavior, either by receiving complaints and smoothing stressed coworkers or by trying to manage your own stress, that's at least 50 hours a year. Would you spend one working week a year sticking a needle in your eye? It's not worth it, no matter how much you adjust to the pain.
4. "Does this really matter? People need to act like adults and just do their work."



Sue Thompson is a personality expert, etiquette trainer, and an instructor in life lessons. Her work on recognizing and developing talent, identifying personalities and working effectively with the people who possess them, responding appropriately to difficult experiences, treating others with respect, and behaving like a professional have caused companies and business organizations throughout the country to value her consulting skills. She trains those entering the workforce how to present themselves with style and authority; new employees in the importance of respecting one's work and the workplace; managers in the value of understanding employees' talent and temperament; and everyone in the timeless rules of behavior that will always bespeak excellence.

Quick Links

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The King and I
Adopt-A-Greyhound

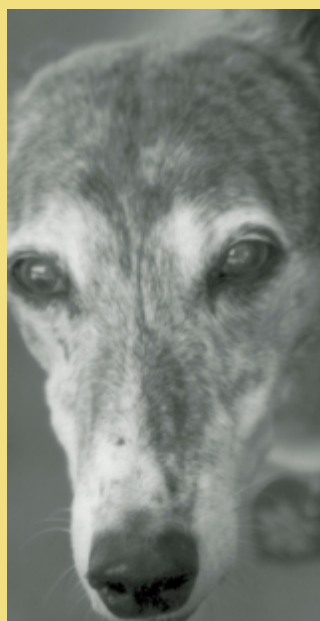
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Exactly. You've got someone who doesn't act like an adult. And you don't want to deal with it because you're a coward or you're oblivious to the toll it's taking. Is that leadership? Uh . . . NO.

Don Hewitt of Ira, Vermont, got away with embezzlement and fraud for three decades because people trusted him. How much are your uncivil, ill-mannered, deliberately contentious, utterly arrogant employees costing you in general productivity and, even more insidious, overall job satisfaction? A great position with a generous company can be ruined by just one awful person who gets away with rotten behavior. Employees rightly feel executives are asleep, snoring while behaviors go unchecked.

Don Hewitt got away with his shenanigans for a long time. How long will the thorn in your flesh keep extracting his or her pound of flesh? Deal with it. 🐾

Teddy Bear Says...



Summer is approaching and the Teddy Bear has a brief and emotional plea to all who want to be taken seriously in business: dress for work as though you are going to work, not as though you are going to the beach.

Yes, it is an emotional plea on behalf of employers everywhere, particularly in businesses where one must deal with the public in any way. Dress as though the people you meet with matter. Show them first by your attire—in that first visible impression of what you think of them—that you consider

them important enough to dress well and appropriate for the level at which you operate. They may dress as though they are on their way home to clean the garage; you, on the other hand, need to be in context, and that context is BUSINESS.

Unless you work in a leisure-related venture for which dressing completely casual makes sense, or you are in construction or maintenance or some other industry for which a higher level of professional attire makes *no* sense, show people you mean business by clothing yourself that way. It's nice to show your coworkers you respect them and the place in which you work by dressing appropriately, too, even if your company's dress code does not require it and even if you think no one notices or cares. The truth is, you stand out simply because you look good in a sea of those who don't care. The Teddy Bear must deal with this all the time as a Greyhound in the midst of mutts.

People tend to act more professionally when they are dressed so. Don't be a mutt. Be a Greyhound. There is no higher calling, in my professional opinion. 🐾

Quotable

It is curious—curious that physical courage should be so common in the world, and moral courage so rare.

Mark Twain in Eruption

Contact Sue today to learn how she can meet your business needs

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YOUR CHARACTER IS SHOWING

Next month I'll begin my teleseminar series on how character strengths drive business and life decisions. I'm interviewing successful professionals on the role their values play in the way they approach their businesses and what they see as their mission in life. They will have taken the [VIA Character Strengths Profile](#) and received the full interpretive report, not simply the free results offered to any who wish to take the online profile. After discussion with my participant, I'll interview him or her on an hour-long call to which you are all invited! The recordings will be posted on a new web page, accessible both directly and through my web site.



My first interview will be with [Dr. Howard Giles](#), a phenomenally successful dentist in Wilmington, Delaware. He's not only my dentist—he's also Arnold Palmer's dentist, and has authored a photorial of his observations of Arnie titled [The King and I: An Unlikely Journey from Fan to Friend](#). Dr. Giles is one of the most upbeat, optimistic people I know, and I'll be asking him how his optimism and drive have acted to create Dental Associates of Delaware.

I'll be sending out an email to invite you to the call! Stay tuned! 🐾

Image is Everything Except When it's Not

You've got the education and background, and you continue to develop your skills. But unless you know how to package these assets, few will be interested in looking beyond what they can see to find out what's inside!

Employers are looking for—and hold onto—quality and excellence.

Do they know you possess it? How?

Click to learn more about this exciting workshop.



Click Etiquette Dog to visit my blog