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Kiss the Ring: Hierarchy Matters (It's not what you think)

By Dr. Karen Otazo

Excerpted from The Truth About Managing Your Career And Nothing But The Truth.

Someone once asked a Washington insider how to deal with important people whom you can't stand. His reply? You put on your respectful face and you don't blink. This strategy is known in business circles as kissing the ring. Its origins lie in a much earlier era, when royalty and clerics wore rings of office denoting their status. Bowing your head as you kissed their rings was how you showed respect for their office, while not necessarily feeling that sentiment towards the characters themselves.

Why go to the trouble to show deference to someone you don't personally like or respect? In the cut and thrust world of business, as in the political sphere, it's all about survival. Or, to look at it more positively, enlightened self-interest. Like it or not, the business world is structured by a strong sense of hierarchy. Why else would we be so fixated on gaining promotions and better titles? Those high up can have a significant impact upon your reputation and career: positive if they like you and see you playing by the rules, negative if they feel slighted by you in some way. Showing them the appropriate respect helps keep your career path obstacle free.

Kissing the ring might mean responding in a neutral to positive way when someone important says something off base in a meeting. Or staying positive with your boss when he or she doesn't understand what you're trying to do or say. However irritated or amazed you feel, keep your facial expression kind and free of negativity, a kind of poker face. It's worth practicing this in front of the mirror so that it's ready to put on when you need it.

Kissing the ring doesn't mean being sycophantic though. It's just about treading carefully around egos. There's nothing wrong with telling a senior person that you think there might be a better way of doing things, but just make sure that you think strategically and don't react there and then, especially if there are others present. If you are genuinely concerned about something you might want to bring it up in private in a neutral way but not make a big deal out of it. You do this by talking about it in a low-key way, tactfully introducing your point by saying, "By the way, what do you think of...?" or, "Is there is a case to be made for this other point of view?"

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Are there *don't* kiss the ring moments too? You bet. As soon as anything looks the slightest bit immoral or illegal you need to stop and think. *Don't* jump to conclusions, but once you've confirmed that something improper is up, do everything you can to extricate yourself from the situation before you get into trouble. If, for example, your company requires that the highest level person at a dinner should pick up the expenses then you might hesitate before paying for something so that your boss doesn't have to put it on his or her expense report. While illegality is something that you should always report, without exception. There are ex-employees of Enron or Health South, currently in jail, who probably wish they had spoken up, or even left their jobs, rather than keeping mum.

Kissing the ring is one of a repertoire of respectful behaviors that will serve you in good stead with high ranking people. At some point in your career you will have to suck in your gut and show deference to a senior person whom you can't stand. Be prepared for it. See more about Dr. Karen Otazo at

<http://www.globalleadershipnetwork.com>

<http://www.otazo.com>

Dr Otazo is an author, consultant and global executive coach. She worked in multi-nationals in US, China, Indonesia, India, France.

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Victorian Weddings

By George Meszaros

The ceremony of marriage is normally governed by the religious formularies of the church to which the bride may belong, which chooses the clergyman for its performance.

The bride has usually two bridesmaids, and the groom the same number of groomsmen. This number is not set in stone, and it may be increased. The proper Victorian marriage is customarily performed at 12 o'clock in the day, at the church, which is first entered by the bride resting on the arm of her father, uncle, or the person is to "give her away." Next comes the groom, with the mother or closest female relative. The groomsmen and bridesmaids, arm in arm follow them. The immediate relatives complete the procession to the altar, where the bride and groom take their places in advance, with the parents closely behind, and the rest gathered in a group about them.

The groom is responsible for providing the wedding ring, and have it in readiness at the proper moment when called upon to place it on the bride's ring finger. The ring is placed on the third finger from, but not

counting the thumb of the left hand.

After the wedding ceremony is complete, the question sometimes arises whether the bride is to be kissed by the groom. Traditionally, the kiss is considered improper behavior, but it is, of course, common practice today. Finally, all their friends and family in the church congratulate the bride and groom. Elderly relatives may kiss the bride in congratulation. Queen Victoria herself was kissed by the Duke of Sussex, but not by Prince Albert.

The married couple then return to the bride's house together, taking precedence of all, and, on arrival, assume a standing position at one end of the reception-room and await the coming of the invited guests, who, as they enter, are conducted by the groomsmen to offer their congratulations. The usual breakfast or lunch closes the ceremony.

George Meszaros

<http://www.sweet-reflections.com>



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