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The Nice People's Guide to Business Politics

By Lisa Lake

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I re-entered the workforce after years of being a stay at home mom. I knew that I was good at what I did, but when I first started back in business it seemed that nothing I did was good enough. I felt I was lost at sea. It seemed that people were mad at me for no reason, or people didn't like the things I had to say. My work was good, but not fast enough, and on and on. Sometimes I would leave the office so stressed out that when I got home I couldn't be cheery with my husband and kids.

I was determined to get out of my rut so I started analyzing what was going on. I knew I did a good job, and that I was a pleasant enough person. It had to be something else. I asked my husband what he thought, and he brought up office politics. He said that, in a lot of businesses, your social skills and behavior have as much or more influence as your actual job performance on how you were treated. He told me to open my eyes and ears and to start noticing what was going on around me and to try to adapt.

The first thing I did was listen to the morning conversations in the break room. I was usually pretty chatty with the friendlier people, but I decided to keep it down for a few days. What were people talking about? It seemed that people were talking about business issues and current events. I guess I'd forgotten that everyone didn't have kids, and that soccer and scouts weren't popular office topics.

I made a commitment to myself to read the morning paper on the bus, instead of the latest romance novel, at least 3 days a week, and to make an input in the more serious office conversations.

Of course I'd still talk about my kids with the ladies I'd become friendly with, but on our own time. The guys in the office really started responding. They even ask me my opinion on issues now.

Next I decided to figure out why my boss, who was seemingly so friendly, would sometimes complain about me behind my back. I really started listening to what she was asking for, and I realized that she was a little vague sometimes, and therefore maybe I wasn't always understanding what she wanted.

I decided to start asking more questions to make sure I was up on

things. One thing I figured out in this process was that when she said, "Could you try to get to this," she really meant, "I need this right now!" Well, I was worried at first that she'd think I was bugging her, but after a few days of my new approach, she actually pulled me aside and thanked me, and told me my work was really improving.

I was also a little worried about asking for help so much around my area. Computers were new to me and I wasn't really good at using them. I started asking the people near me to help me with the different programs, and they were pretty willing to help, at first. I didn't catch on really quickly, and I started noticing sighs and glares when I would ask for help yet again.

Well, the first thing I decided to do was to thank everyone for their help, so I made up goody baskets for everyone in my area one Monday. I came in a little early and left cookies and homemade candy, along with a card saying "thanks for the help," for everyone in my division. Everyone loved them, and the smiles returned.

Next I went down to the community college and registered for a six week office applications seminar. I missed my kids for a few nights, but it was sure worth it. Soon I was one of those people who gets asked the questions, and my boss commended me on my initiative.

Well, my experience at that office went from bad to great, and with only a little effort on my part. I'm in business for myself now, but I find that everything I learned during that period still helps me with clients, and even with my family. It definitely pays to pay attention.

Lisa Lake has created a list of top promotional methods on her <http://MyAdBlaster.com> Lisa also writes ad copy that sells for DrNunley's <http://InternetWriters.com> Reach her at <mailto:lisa@myadblaster.com> or 801-328-9006.

Office Politics

By Kevin Hobbs

Office politics! It's just another way of saying: "The employees are not getting along!"

When so much of a company's success depends on the employees' ability to work together as a cohesive team, it is critical that people understand and appreciate the differences in each other.

Symptoms of Office Politics: Conflict Stress Job Dissatisfaction Poor communication skills

The Results: High employee turnover Reduced productivity and profitability

The Solution: Improve employee communication and understanding

The Disc Classic behavioral assessment is widely used by the nation's largest companies to improve the working relationship amongst its employees. The disc profile provides a nonjudgmental way to explore the "Dimensions of Behavior" across these 4 dimensions: Dominance, Influence, Steadiness, and Conscientiousness. D types like to be in control, and are direct, impatient, and strong-willed. I types are people-oriented and are expressive, outgoing, and they need recognition. S types are stable, predictable, and they like to work behind the scenes. They are good listeners and are sympathetic. C types are analytical, and concerned with quality. They like to plan ahead and are systematic in their way of doing things.

When employees understand the different work styles and how best to relate to each style, the "Office Politics" may be a thing of the past.

To purchase the Disc Classic profile or any other Inscape Publishing product, visit

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Kevin Hobbs writes for

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Office Politics

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