

## 5 IRRITATING THINGS NOT TO DO IF YOU WANT CAREER SUCCESS



Sometimes it's not having a grand ambition that smoothes you along your career. It's the subtle touch, the general texture of your interactions that win the respect and admiration of those you work for and who work for you. And while advice such as "be likeable" "be yourself" "follow your dreams" and so forth are as helpful as that from those who tell you that "happiness is a choice," suggesting that they made the choice and you foolishly refuse to, nevertheless there are some simple behaviors we can change to ensure our work life moves in the right direction. They boil down to demonstrating a proper respect for yourself and others.

### 1. Avoid disrespecting others

If you show deference and respect only for those you wish to ingratiate, it will show. If, however, you can respect the fast food server who screws up your order during rush hour, by showing compassion and patience, you will develop the mindset of respect that will create an atmosphere of comfort and warmth around you. It takes practice to realize how others are experiencing you, and to realize when you are costing them time. Since you respect yourself as well, this does not mean serving others or being overly eager to please; it means respecting others and yourself at the same time. Give people the benefit of the doubt. If somebody cuts you off, you don't need to chalk this up as a sign of personal disrespect to you that you must avenge by riding his or her tail. Dare to think well of others, that maybe they made an honest mistake or otherwise have some justification when they seem to disrespect you. Yet when you are disrespected, respect yourself enough to affirm your place and dignity.

### 2. Avoid hijacking conversations

Don't pose a question just to answer it yourself. If you ask your friend, "what do you think about the recent election?" and then cut him off with your take on it, he might feel that he never cared about his opinion, but that you only wanted to be admired for your take. Your friends and colleagues want to be respected and admired. If you can find things you can honestly respect and admire about them, and be confident enough that you aren't threatened by this, you can focus on what is best in others, instead of what is worst in them. It is easy enough to see others in terms of how you are better than them. If you can see them in terms of their strengths, and think of them in terms of their strengths, they will feel this in your look of respect. So when you enter a conversation, let it progress naturally, and at times give the other person the lead. We all have a knack for twisting conversations back to our pet interests, and that is fine, but respect that others have their own pet interests.

### 3. Avoid being needy

We all have needs, and we all have social needs. We want to feel important, respected, loved, desired. And when we feel threatened, when a boss criticizes us, when a loved one leaves us, we need some comfort, that is natural. The problem is when it's chronic, when your self-doubt leads you to lay traps and trip up others to massage your constant ache. We all know people like this, the woman who complains about her husband, the coworker who complains about upper management. It becomes less a real complaint, more just an excuse to rant, like some sort of stand up comedian without the laughs. But when you are seeking out others not because you respect or admire them, but because you want them to praise you and build you up, they will come to sense why you talk to them, and may either resent it, or use it for their own interests.

### 4. Avoid meddling

The great leader inspires his followers to lead themselves. Don't write an email requesting a coworker to do a thing and then follow it up with requests on when it is going to be done and how it is coming. Set your expectations, make them clear, and let it be. Learn to trust others to be competent. Even if they aren't competent, your expectations may inspire them, whereas your impositions will have the opposite effect. The more you seem controlling the more others will resent you and want to defy you to regain some autonomy. The paradox of control is that you must give up control to have more. The more you try to micromanage, the less authority others will have over themselves, and the more they will resent you.

### 5. Avoid asking too much

It's not that you should have low expectations of others, but you must be reasonable in your expectations. Nobody wants to be a disappointment. Set them up to be impressive. Make it as easy as possible for them to raise themselves to your expectations. If you ask for more than what others are comfortable giving, even if they do give it, this one time, they may distance themselves from you. Make reasonable requests, and also give back when requests are made of you. If another asks too much of you, don't be polite and put yourself out. Clarify what you are able and willing to give and do. This again returns to the relationship between self respect and respect of others. You may serve others but you first of all serve yourself.