



THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING WELL-LIKED IN YOUR JOB

This is at odds with many people's personalities. Salespeople thrive on competition and being number one. Attorneys, accountants, and engineers, among many others, were once quite competitive at academics and spent a lot of time studying to get an edge over their peers. In some work environments, many people work alone.

Regardless of your job, you are part of a social dynamic inside your organization. Beyond any other single thing - including your work product - the largest obstacle to anyone's success is a social dynamic turning against you. If your co-workers do not like you, word will spread and your career in your organization may be doomed. If a group of superiors do not like you, the same thing will occur.

Being well-liked in a work environment is an important thing in any job. If you are not liked by your peers, your superiors may think clients will not like you either. If superiors do not like you, you will not get a lot of work. If you are isolated from others within your organization, it is far easier to let you go in times of economic uncertainty. You need to always be in a position where others want to do you a favor and help you out.

There are several keys to being well-liked at work. The most important of these are (1) not getting actively involved in cliques, (2) never saying anything bad about any co-worker, no matter what, (3) making your superiors feel important, (4) listening (do not talk too much) and asking about others, (5) participating in "group solidarity" activities, and (6) keeping your head down and smiling.

One of the most dangerous things you can do is get actively involved in cliques at work. While there is nothing wrong with being part of a social group, work is likely the wrong place to do this.

First, cliques, like all social organizations, go through their ups and downs. A unifying trait of cliques is the cohesive bond that's created due to a shared set of circumstances. One of the most unifying types of circumstances cliques experience is when bad things happen to their members. When bad things happen to the members of a clique, the clique tends to come together and unite against the "negative outside forces" that created the bad circumstances. Rest assured bad things will happen to members of your clique inside virtually any organization.

In most companies and organizations, approximately 50 percent of employees will leave or be fired within the first two to three years. While this is not necessarily a bad thing, many people leave under bad circumstances because they have done something wrong. In addition, a lot of these people will be angry with the organization and its superiors, and the superiors will know they are angry.

If you or a group of very close peers have been seen spending a great deal of time with someone who leaves under bad circumstances, the perception will be that you are angry as well. The firm may even believe you are thinking of leaving for the same reasons. You do not want to be associated with this. You will be perceived as being on the wrong team.

Also, if you are involved in a clique there will be others who, by the very existence of your clique, will feel excluded. They may not be invited to certain lunches, may hear about you doing things outside of work with other clique members, and may walk by the office and see you and other clique members speaking. This will make them feel excluded. When people feel excluded, they generally have a response.

The most typical response inside organizations is the people who feel excluded may form their own clique. Alternatively, they may decide that, since your group is not interested in them (rightly or wrongly), their best course of action is to work harder, kiss up to superiors more, or look better than members of your clique in some way.

Finally, most of the people who advance were never part of cliques. The reason? They did not have the time! Most of the highest-ranking employees in organizations worked extremely hard when they were younger to the point where they had figurative blinders on to everything and everyone that was not relevant to their advancement. Most have very little to fall back on in their professional life other than their work product. Moreover, many of these higher-level people realized cliques were bad news and did not participate in them for that reason.

People advance inside companies because they are extremely committed and never want to telegraph any sort of message that would question their commitment to the organization. When you join a clique, you immediately communicate the message you are not like your superiors were when they were in your shoes.

In addition to not joining cliques, you should never say anything bad about your coworkers, no matter what. In most organizations your interaction with others will invariably involve rumors, statements about other people's actions, and interesting stories about events in your co-workers' personal lives. In addition, the professional competence of other associates will be frequently discussed among groups of people.

The reaction of most people is to listen intently and contribute their own negative feelings about the individual in the story. After all, relaying another's misfortune may give you the sense you are doing very well. Furthermore, most people love telling these sorts of stories and sharing rumors with each other. There are numerous problems with this.

First, you have no way of knowing if the person you're talking about will eventually hear what you've said. If word gets back to that person, he or she will be upset with you. They may be eagerly waiting for you to mess up so they can tell others about your misfortune. You never know. If you are able to avoid this, when you do something that merits gossip, others will be less likely to speak negatively about you.

Second, you do not look like a nice person when you engage in gossip. In fact, to most individuals with serious leadership potential you will look very weak. The weakest people are typically those most interested in gossip. The next time you are in a group, watch how the negative people react to gossip. Oftentimes they will even smile because they are so happy someone else has something negative associated with them. Do not allow yourself to fall into this trap. If you do not engage in gossip, others will respect you more.

Third, be extremely careful when saying negative things about others in your organization, especially subordinates. If you engage in bad mouthing your subordinates, they will find out. If you upset your subordinates, they can create a tremendous amount of difficulty for you in the organization. Most attorneys, for example, make mistakes that staff members cover for every week. Upset a [legal staff](#) member and you can kiss that shielding goodbye. They will ensure as many people know about your errors as possible. More importantly, they can tell partners other associates do not like you and more. They can do this in a manner that makes them look good and you bad. You do not want to fight this war. Whatever field you may be in, it is never a good idea to upset your staff members.

You should also consider the feelings of your superiors. Your superiors hired you because they need you to work. They simply cannot do all the work themselves. That is why your job exists. You help them make money and make them look good. Everyone in this world, including you, wants to feel important. You need to make your superiors feel like they are important. If you do this, they will like you and will reward you. It is that simple.

You need to be a soldier, not a general. Soldiers carry out orders and do not question them. Generals give orders, hold authority, and are rewarded for strategy and a job well done. When you work for a superior, you want him or her to be rewarded for your excellent work. You will, in turn, be rewarded.

One of the biggest mistakes young people make in many organizations is presuming they are generals who have a great deal of latitude with decisions and whose advice regarding strategy and more is welcome at any time. It is not. No matter how smart you are, if you are dealing with someone who has substantially more experience than you they probably have a reason for doing things the way they do.

I realize how this language sounds. Nevertheless, when you are younger, your job is to make your superiors look good. You do not make your superiors look good if you constantly question their motives, don't follow orders, and create your own protocol. You'll have ample time to be a general later. Before you are a general, though, you must be a soldier.

Your superiors, like you, face a lot of people who make them feel unimportant, whether it's one of their own superiors, a [judge](#), or a spouse. Your superiors want to surround themselves with people who make them feel good. If the method of advancing to higher levels is a secret to you, I will tell you how it works. Just like you surround yourself in your personal life with people who make you feel good, so too do your superiors in their professional lives. When they like people, they want to help them. Being well-liked by superiors requires that you make them feel important.

It is possible to figure out how to accomplish this by listening. You need to listen to your superiors and coworkers. It is amazing how most of us really like people who ask us about ourselves. People love to talk about themselves. To most of us, we are the most interesting people in the world. Most of the smartest people I have ever encountered are individuals who do a lot of listening and ask others about themselves. Moreover, if you do a lot of listening, you can learn a tremendous amount and grow. Avoid the temptation to talk about yourself.

Very few people take the time to listen to others. If you listen to others and their stories they will like you better. They will also think you are interesting, even if they do all the talking. Think about the people you find interesting. Most likely they are the ones who let you talk about yourself the most.

You should never volunteer a lot of information about yourself or your personal life. Unless you are somehow scandalous or someone with remarkable personality traits, very few people care to listen to what you have to say anyway. I hate to say this, but it is largely true.

You can learn a lot from listening. The more you listen, the more you learn and the more you can help your career. No matter the size of your organization, if you listen you will learn far more than you could on your own. This knowledge will greatly help your career.

To gain the best knowledge you need to spend time with the right people. You need to go to your organization's parties. You need to be there whenever the organization does something as a group. This is essential. If you are not there, you will telegraph the message that you do not like your co-workers. Go to company functions.

Finally, keep your head down and smile. One of the most remarkable things I ever witnessed was an election in an organization of which I was a part. It came time for the organization to elect a president, and there were several candidates. The problem was, each of the candidates was part of a particular faction of the organization and had enemies. The person who ultimately won was never involved in any organizational conflict, was involved very little overall, and had the fewest friends within the organization. However, the person participated in the organization's activities, had several acquaintances in the organization, never said anything bad about anyone, and never participated in gossip. This person won the election by a landslide.

And so it is with most organizations. The people who advance are most often the same as this individual. To advance, you need to be non-confrontational and well-liked and keep out of trouble. The best way to do this is to keep your head down, do good work, and be associated with making people feel good. If you do this, and nothing more, you will have a lot of stability in any organization.

Doing a job well is about more than the quality of your work. It is about how well others like you. A discussion about being well liked and what it involves could go on and on. Certainly, a course in [human relations](#) could be much more involved than the little we have touched on here. If you follow the above rules, though, you should do just fine.

This article was originally published in www.aharrisonbarnes.com. A. Harrison Barnes is the founder and CEO of CareerMission.com, the parent company of more than 100 job search websites, employment services, recruiting firms, online employment news magazines and student loan companies. Harrison also writes daily articles to inspire and motivate job seekers. Log on to HarrisonBarnes.com to read many more such inspirational articles.

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