

Check Out Your “Rule Book”

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We each have an invisible edition of our personal “rule book” deeply ingrained in our brains. These guidelines define our expectations and desires of how others should treat us; what we believe is right, fair and just; and how the world and its people should behave.

We judge people by our book. We have rules about being courteous, extending appreciation, acknowledging work, honoring time, demonstrating concern, being compassionate, delivering service, and the degree of effort required for projects. We have rules about how fast people should return phone calls and e-mails, reply to requests, respond with answers, handle problems, pitch in on projects, and most importantly, what people generally should do and what they shouldn't. The rules all serve as our invisible code of conduct with expectations of reciprocal exchange or else!

Observe your own rules in action whenever you become frustrated, irritated or annoyed with a customer, coworker, friend or loved one. Not knowing how important something is to you, they may have bumped up against one of your Rules.

People play by their own rules and may not be familiar with yours. In fact, they may be totally clueless! Even if they know yours, it doesn't mean they'll abide by them (as every parent knows only too well!). In any case, when someone breaks your “rules” your expectations start generating a steady stream of reasons to penalize or disconnect from the “Violator.” Imposing expectations on others only adds to your aggravation and creates or widens a chasm.

Whether whispered around water coolers, voiced over the phone, or overheard at meetings, the following comments are sure signs that people are either puzzled, peeved, or both, and that someone's “rules” have been violated:

- Who does she think she is butting into the copy machine line?
- Everyone should do his or her share of work!
- It's not my job! They should (replace the coffee pot ... pick up their own stuff ... make their own arrangements)
- She's been here long enough and should know what to do without me having to be so specific
- They've been through the training and shouldn't have to be told how to something again.
- They should have followed my recommendations!

Examine your rules as they arise. Don't waste your time collecting "evidence" of violations; invest it in creating good connections

This article is from the book, "Get Along with Anyone, Anytime, Anywhere ... 8 keys to creating enduring connections with customers, co-workers – even kids" by Arnold Sanow and Sandra Strauss

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