



MANAGEMENT 5.2

The 'Nice' Guy

You may be thinking to yourself, I'm not that much of a Nice Guy because I am tough on some people. That's the double whammy of the Nice Guy, he's toughest on himself and those closest to him. He'll demand high standards, have high expectations of people close to him and, most especially, with himself.

But when it comes to negative people or people with problems, he'll want to help. He can't stand the thought of anyone being upset or hurt. He'll know what they need to do, start to give them solutions and bingo, he's hooked! He's latched himself on to a problem person and he'll bend over backwards to be 'fair' while at the hands of a master manipulator. His mistake is often in wanting to help a person who wants the problem more than the solution. Nice Guys look at the results the person is experiencing rather than at what they are doing to create those results.

An Employee who's late for work

Sandra is late for work most days. By calling her into your office to address the issue, you fulfil your role as a manager or supervisor. Sandra admits she's been late and, bravely holding back the tears, explains that she's had a terrible row with her boyfriend. You are sympathetic but firm, you understand she's having problems at home but she must try and get to work on time. You extract a tearful promise from her and send her on her way. You feel that you've addressed the situation fairly and firmly, with understanding and compassion but reminded her of her obligations to the company. The next day, much to your satisfaction, Sandra is on time. However, the following day, she's running late again. You ask yourself, what did you do wrong? What did you miss?

Look back on your meeting with Sandra — who did most of the talking? You? Who dictated the promise for her to be on time? You!

What part did Sandra take in the proceedings? She was upset because she has a problem at home, she listened to you and she agreed with you. But she also knows that you're a Nice Guy and, at the moment, she'd rather face your gentle disapproval than confront the real problem. Going along with your demand that she should change her behaviour is vastly different from Sandra voluntarily making a commitment to change.

So how should the Nice Guy handle this situation and get her to change? Firstly, you have to get her to take responsibility for her behaviour. Get her to tell you what she's been doing that is not acceptable. She needs to tell you:

- What should be happening?
- What does she need to do to make this happen?
- What might stop her?
- What does she need to do to ensure she continues the way she intends to?

The key is to get the other person to take responsibility for what is happening to them. You telling them that they have to change and getting them to agree to it, will change nothing.

The problem with Sandra wasn't that she was having problems with her boyfriend but that she wasn't taking responsibility for getting to work on time. If you let her off the hook, I can promise you that you'll have to address the situation further down the track when it has become an even bigger problem.

Nice Guys rationalise why they shouldn't handle problems. Poor Sandra, she's upset. It would be better if I talk to her tomorrow when she's calmer. I'll talk to her when the time is right. And then tomorrow you're busy, so you decide to talk to her the next day. Aren't you secretly hoping that by the time you get around to talking to her, the problem will have gone away?

By letting Sandra off the hook you are sending her some powerful messages.

- It's okay to let your personal life spill over into your work life.
- Your arguments with your boyfriend are more important than your professional image.
- The boss thinks it's okay to be late as long as you have a good enough excuse.

Now deep down, you already know this. But your own emotion stops you from handling it because you don't want to upset her. In your imagination you role-play what is going to happen when you talk to Sandra. You imagine her bursting into tears, so initially you avoid it. Not deliberately, but you rationalise that you'll find the right time.

Breaking through the hesitation created by your emotion takes practice. It's very much like standing on the edge of a swimming pool. You're feeling hot and sticky, maybe you've been gardening or mowing the lawns. You know the water's going to be icy cold and you hesitate. Common sense and logic tells you that you'll feel better after a swim but you hesitate.

You hesitate because emotion and imagination are more powerful than thoughts or logic.

You shiver imagining the shock of the cold water. But, if your intention is strong and you have a sense of long-term consequences, you dive in. The cold water makes you gasp but you keep swimming. Soon you feel revitalised, refreshed, you feel great! You're pleased that you dived in.

It's the same with emotion. Emotion is what makes us hesitate. The Nice Guy doesn't want

to hurt or upset others. By putting off the discussion, have you helped the other person if she faces the same situation again? Are you supporting her as a capable person or are you supporting her as an incapable person?

Filling the Battery

Nice Guys want to avoid upsetting other people at all costs. But look at what happens. Unexpressed emotion is like a filling battery. Don't say something and the battery starts to fill. Sandra is late again and, when you don't address it, the battery fills a little more. You come across a cluster of office staff comforting her in the corridor and walk by without saying anything, frustration builds and the battery fills even more. Sandra is late again and it's like putting a spanner across the connections of the battery, kapow!!!! You let her have it.

If you say something, the battery doesn't fill. Don't say what you want to and you will continue to think about it and get annoyed well beyond what the situation deserves. You'll say things which indicate how you feel rather than what is appropriate to the situation. Quite simply, you wouldn't be feeling this way if you had said something earlier.

The trick is for you to identify why you didn't speak up in the first place. What were you trying to avoid?

Identify the trap

Look around you and see if you have people you help who don't help or support you in return. In other words, if you've been "helping" a sales rep and yet after a reasonable period of time, he still isn't helping you by achieving budget, take another look at the situation. Put aside the excuses which both you and the other person are accepting as fact, and look at what is stopping him from changing. What is he doing which is contributing to the situation?

Nice Guys usually only see one point of view, that of the victim. Now imagine you or your business as being victimised and ruthlessly taken advantage of by that person, and then decide how you should handle them.