

Smart Strategies

Solutions for Workplace Challenges



Alan Krieger
President
Krieger Solutions, LLC

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A Great Little Book...

*[The Power of Nice; How to
Conquer the Business World
with Kindness](#)*

Dear Reader,

Spring is here... but so is the snow. Hopefully it's on its last legs and then the weather should begin to really get nice. And that's our theme for this issue - learning to maximize our "nice" actions. I read a very helpful book about this and have some reflections on it. I also address the most difficult part of being a supervisor - how to hold people accountable.

Finally, I offer you a couple of opportunities to be nice - to yourself, to others at work, and to others across the ocean.

Happy reading!

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Alan'.

Alan Krieger

Feel free to forward this newsletter to friends and colleagues.



The Power of Nice

(See side bar for information about the book and for a chance to do something Nice right now!)

Read to the end of this article for information about a free on-line course.

One of my coaching clients discovered this book and assigned it to one of her senior staff to read. I ended up coaching this person as well... so I read the book. While all of us are genuinely nice people... not everyone we come into contact sees us that way.

by Linda Kaplan Thaler and
Robin Koval; published by
Doubleday 2006

**Here's a chance to be
nice... for only \$6!**

A close friend of mine is helping build a school in Liberia (in West Africa) in a shanty town outside the capital. My friend has done a lot of great work on behalf of Liberia and this is one of the more ambitious projects he's taken on. They are trying to build a 4 room school house to serve 200 children currently going in staggered shifts to a one room school house!

He has raised the money for 3 rooms and is working on the 4th. If each person on this newsletter list gave \$3 we'd be there... Since at least 1/2 of them won't, if you can send \$6 (or more), we can raise the \$3,000 remaining.

My friend is partnering with Albany's Westminster Presbyterian Church, so all donations are tax deductible. Please make the check out to Westminster Presbyterian Church and in the memo line put "Liberia Fund".

You can send them directly to the church at
Westminster Presbyterian
85 Chestnut Street
Albany, NY 12210

I just got off a nasty phone call with some inept customer service people. I wasn't very nice. Using the lessons from this book, I could have stepped back, slowed down, accepted that they had a procedure to follow and been more patient with them. I could have imagined them as they are in their "movie" - trying to do the best they can with an increasingly difficult customer. Instead I focused on my movie, getting a billing error straightened out in the fastest time possible. I would have "won" either way, but could have saved us all some stress by exercising my power of nice.

This little book presents a way to live in the world in a much more positive and happy way. It is full of simple hands-on exercises that help people shift their world view from a fear, scarcity and competition based view to one of abundance, good feelings and collaboration. While I imagine most of you reading this are overall very nice people... we all have our moments and days (and sometimes weeks!) where it seems everything is going wrong or everyone is out to get us... or as the caption of an old cartoon of someone frazzled read: "I had one nerve left and you've just stepped on it!"

Reading this book won't eliminate those situations, but it will give you a reservoir of good cheer to help you coast through those situations and will give you practical tools to reshape the rough parts of your life into a more pleasant world.

I'd like to expand my "nice" moments to completely fill my day. And by following the tips in this book, I think I can get there. To help me (and you), I've put together an on-line class to build up our powers of nice. I'm not charging anything for it - you'll be doing me (and hopefully you!) a favor by signing up for this free on-line class. I find I learn best when I teach others, so I'm hoping you'll join me on this quest for strengthening our powers of nice.

Every two weeks I'll send out an exercise or two for you to try with your co-workers, friends and even strangers! Most will be right out of the book. All I ask are two things:

- Take 5 minutes a day to think about the exercise and find some situations where you can use it.
- Drop me an email after a few weeks to let me know if you're having success.

I'll be working it right along with you and will share some of my experiences along the way. Let's start right now...

The "movie" allusion above is right out of the book and here's the first exercise:

Think about the other people in your life - at home and at work. Most people generally see themselves as stars of their own movies and see others as

or send them to me and I'll forward them along.

Alan Krieger
5223 Scotch Ridge Road
Duanesburg, NY 12056.

**Our Newsletter Sponsor
this month:**

Spirit Wind Studios

Do something nice for yourself! Check out retreats to refresh your creativity and your spirit... or find art to inspire you and brighten your space!

For more information go to spiritwindstudio.net

Spirit Wind Studio is a creation of Judith Prest... my wife and a very talented artist.

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Feel free to forward this email to friends and colleagues.

You may also reprint any of these articles as long as you include the following in the reprint and send a copy to me at alan@krsol.com:

"Reprinted from 'Smart Strategies - Solutions to Workplace Challenges', a newsletter from Krieger Solutions, LLC.
www.kriegersolutions.com"

supporting actors in their movies. Make a short list of how people in your life see you in their movie and what you can do to become the best supporting actor you can be. How can you make your character more valuable and valued? Rewrite your script for one movie scene and see if you can memorize the new lines and make them work. Good luck!

If you'd like to sign up for this e-course, email [Pam Fenoff](mailto:Pam.Fenoff), our very nice Office Manager! I don't want to send you extra emails unless you "opt-in". (It's always easy to unsubscribe if you find you don't find value in it.)

Leadership Tip: How and when to draw the line. *No more Mr. Nice Guy!*

I know I just wrote enthusiastically about the power of nice... and here I am writing about how to fire someone! Some people think of this as "*No more Mr. Nice Guy!!!*"

The good news is that you can hold people accountable and be nice at the same time!

Here's a true story from a recent leadership training program I conducted... I hear the same basic story in almost every leadership class I teach. A supervisor had an employee who had been at the company a long time. The employee was knowledgeable and capable, but had lost their motivation to work hard... or actually work at all. The supervisor tried everything he could think of to positively motivate the employee - took him to lunch, spent time listening to him, gave him positive feedback, clarified expectations... all to no avail. So he reluctantly went to his manager and asked to start the progressive discipline process. The manager said, "This employee has been with us a long time, he has a family to support, we can't fire him. Keep trying to get him back on track." The manager wants to be seen by everyone as a nice guy.

But who was being "nice"? Actually it was the supervisor and not the manager. By allowing this worker to continue at a low level of performance, the other people in his work area became more and more angry as they had to shoulder the extra burden. The supervisor was upset and frustrated. The work place became negative and stressful. No one was feeling very happy or positive about the manager... except of course this unmotivated worker who was getting a free ride.

How can you address this from the power of nice? First of all, being nice to everyone who is doing a good job means that you make sure everyone pulls his/her own weight and gets their tasks done and done well. Then take time to let all these folks know what a good job they are doing. At the same time, coach the poor performer and try to turn them around - make sure they

Krieger Solutions, LLC
5223 Scotch Ridge Rd
Duanesburg, NY 12056

518-895-2939
518-895-2947 fax

Alan Krieger
President / Owner

Pam Fenoff
Office Manager

Krieger Solutions, LLC

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understand what is expected and that they have the tools and skills to meet these expectations. Facilitate their problem solving to help them get back on track.... And if all that fails, as it occasionally does (we can't reach everyone), you nicely help the person see that their skills and talents might be more useful in another job.

When giving them feedback, focus on their behavior and show how it is not meeting expectations. Focus on their skills and talents and let them know there are probably other jobs out there that might be a better fit for them. Don't get angry, don't criticize them, and don't scold them. Simply point out that their performance is not meeting expectations and that you've spent a good bit of time trying to help them and since they are still not succeeding, it's time for them to move on. (Or if you have a progressive discipline policy, shape this into the initial warning and repeat the same basic formula each step of the way. All along advising them that they may want to start looking for another job in case they are not able to meet expectations before the last step of the discipline process.)

Being nice does not mean being a wimp. Being nice is using your power to help create the most positive environment you can. Being respectful, acting with integrity, and asking others to do so as well.

What's been your experience in terms of being nice and holding people accountable?