

## ***Stop Being Nice at Work***

Most of us have an innate desire to avoid conflict. This is especially true in the workplace where we can't necessarily change who we interact with on a daily basis. If you clash with a coworker, you have to see that person tomorrow as well as the next day and the day after that. If you don't see eye to eye with someone, it's easier to pretend you do rather than making waves.

However, when we don't speak up to point out poor practices, it can create major organizational problems. Trying to avoid damaging someone's ego should never trump progress. While it can be uncomfortable in the short term to challenge widely accepted ideas and practices, it leads to honest discussions about what's really important and opens the door for improvement.

Lisa Bodell, founder and CEO of futurethink and author of *Kill the Company* suggests the following to help leaders stop being nice at work.

- **Move from one way to two.** When you foster a feedback-driven culture, employees will come to expect thought sharing. Rather than having people give one-way status updates, encourage a collaborative dialogue where everyone feels comfortable responding to the information that's given to them and asking probing questions. Creating an atmosphere where your coworkers can voice opinions is simpler when you don't have to constantly worry about hurting someone's ego.
- **Ask killer questions.** By questioning why things are done a certain way, it encourages people to question longstanding beliefs and opens the door to new possibilities. Encourage your team to ask open-ended questions that lead to creative, groundbreaking solutions. Give teams the chance to think differently, and move forward with more radical ideas.
- **Recognize employees for making waves.** When employees take the risk of creating a productive disruption, give them positive reinforcement. Share these innovative ideas at team meetings or in the employee newsletter to show the staff their opinions are valued.
- **Shake things up.** Discipline yourself and your team to tolerate periods of discomfort in the name of progress. Get you and your team out of their normal routines and encourage everyone to think differently. Be more open to change and provoke positive dialogue within your organization.
- **Kill stupid rules.** In a world where meetings often govern our every move, it's important to schedule time with your team to question norms. Rather than operating on autopilot, make time to regularly assess whether your routine tasks are worth the effort.

Life can certainly be easier when you shy away from questioning the status quo. But it's a sure way to prohibit innovation. When you lead by example and demonstrate how constructive criticism actually is constructive, others will follow your lead.