



A little reverence

R-E-S-P-E-C-T? Find out what it means to you

Move over, Aretha Franklin. While she did popularize the word “respect” in her chart-topping single in 1967, respect has been a fundamental building block for successful companies for decades, well before Aretha arrived on the scene.

Respect does not come with age; it is earned. In my humble opinion, there is no management tool more important or powerful than respect itself.

Businesses fundamentally exist to make money, but the currency that is traded inside every organization is respect.

Walk through any office today and listen to the conversations, from the boardroom to the watercooler. What will you find? Probably elements of both respect and disrespect. If you command respect, people listen attentively when you talk and follow your direction. It can be seen in both body language and facial expressions. On the other hand, if you don’t command respect, you will quickly become the focus of ill-timed conversation.

Having said that, here are eight irrefutable and effective building blocks for you to earn (and keep) respect.

1. Be real. People will not respect you if you are not natural. Our workforce is smart — they have the ability to detect those who are “faking it.” There’s no stronger foundation for earning respect than being, well, you.

2. Be interested. People like to be listened to. When people realize they are being heard, they’ll open up and tell you what is important to them about their jobs, their concerns and goals within the organization. It pays to listen.

3. Be a safe harbor. Workplaces are hotbeds for gossip. Create an environment of openness and confidentiality. When people realize you can safely be told anything within the confines of your relationship, you’ll become the one person everyone seeks out when they really need some perspective, advice and direction.

4. Be helpful. People respect those who contribute. Being a contributor means making it your primary goal to help others achieve their goals. Remember, it is important to pay it forward and work with others within your organization to help their dreams be realized.

5. Be creative. People respect innovation. The “same old, same old” mentality left us years ago. By being creative and coming up with new, fresh ideas will motivate the workforce and results will speak for themselves.

6. Be a risk-taker. Associates gravitate to those who take chances — and are willing to look at life through a different set of



lenses. They do not accept traditional thinking. Be willing to take chances. Remember: Failure is a way we all learn.

7. Be spontaneous. Use your position to create an environment of fun within your organization. Introduce special events and do so without warning. Consider, for example, an Aloha Day after several weeks of dreary weather or hire a massage therapist after a busy business season. Let your mind wander here.

8. Be respectful of other people’s time. There is nothing more valuable in today’s business world than time. You can make more money, but you can’t make more time. One of my favorite mottos that I follow is, “Be brief, be blunt, be gone.” And I live by it.

Remember again, respect does not come with a job title or age; it is earned. Make it a central part of your personal business strategy. The results will speak for themselves. ●

G. A. Taylor Fernley is president and CEO of Fernley & Fernley, an association management company providing professional management services to nonprofit organizations since 1886. He can be reached at tfernley@fernley.com, or for more information, visit www.fernley.com.



SCAN to read more columns
by this author or go to
bit.ly/SBN_Fernley.

