

Are you paying a “Jerk Tax” for your bad manners at work?

New study debunks the myth that when it comes time for promotion, nice people finish last

October 21, 2010 – Provo, UT – A new study from the authors of the *New York Times* bestseller *Crucial Conversations* shows employees with poor people skills pay a “jerk tax” when being considered for promotion.

The online poll which analyzed 1,650 promotions, debunked the common misconception that jerky behavior is necessary to get ahead in business. According to the study, 92 percent said having poor interpersonal skills hinders advancement in their organization.

Joseph Grenny, co-author of *Crucial Conversations*, says riding roughshod over others does not increase one’s chances of promotion—in fact, it’s inhibiting.

“Too many employees suffer under the misconception that they have to be a jerk to generate the results necessary for workplace advancement,” Grenny said. “However, those most likely to be promoted excel not only in adding value but also in their interpersonal competencies.”

According to respondents, those most likely to advance in the workplace have strong interpersonal skills, are strong contributors and care a great deal about their organization. The research also reveals that the combination of strong interpersonal skills and strong results are by far the best predictor of whether an employee will be respected as a leader after the promotion.

Grenny advises employees interested in climbing the corporate ladder to learn how to generate results without generating contempt by developing their ability to communicate candidly and effectively with co-workers. He offers four tips for navigating crucial conversations—high-stakes, politically risky, or emotionally volatile situations—in a way that generates results and improves relationships.

1. **Change your emotions.** In stressful moments, separate people from the problem. Try to see others as reasonable, rational and decent human beings—even if your opinions clash. “Jerks” don’t bother with this principle—they make harsh judgments of others and act out those judgments through mistreatment.
2. **Help others feel safe.** “Jerks” disguise their harshness as “brutal honesty.” In contrast, effective leaders find a way to be both 100% honest and 100% respectful. They do both by starting high-stakes conversation by assuring the other person of their positive intentions and their respect. When others feel respected and trust your motives, they let their guard down and begin to listen—even if the topic is unpleasant.
3. **Just the facts.** Respected leaders describe problems in factual terms—stripping out the negative labels and punitive conclusions commonly used by “jerks.” Without the facts, judgmental statements are far from motivating and create animosity and resistance.
4. **Invite dialogue.** Effective leaders create dialogue while “jerks” settle for monologue. After confidently sharing your views, invite others to do so as well. If you are open to hearing others’ points of view, they’ll be more open to yours.

About VitalSmarts: An innovator in corporate training and organizational performance, VitalSmarts is home to award-winning training products that deliver powerful tools for enriching relationships and improving end results. The company has three *New York Times* bestselling books, *Crucial Conversations*, *Crucial Confrontations*, and *Influencer*. VitalSmarts has taught more than 2 million people worldwide.

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Note to editor: Author Joseph Grenny is available for interview. Copies of *Crucial Conversations* are available upon request.

About the research: The study collected responses via an online survey from 550 book readers in September of 2010. Full survey results available upon request.

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