

Good workplace manners aren't a lost cause

Restoring professional courtesy benefits everyone, even the bottom line, according to a Naples expert.

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Randall Kenneth Jones of Naples created RediscoverCourtesy.org. / Special to Coastal Life

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To illuminate the benefits of using professional courtesy in business relationships, Jones created a website called RediscoverCourtesy.org in October as a project of his Naples-based marketing agency MindZoo.

Better communication and more personal interactions with coworkers, clients and vendors can help everyone, he said, even the bottom line. It breeds more productivity.

"It's not about being negative. It's not for complaining about Comcast. It's not about customer service," he said.

What his website is: an ongoing positive, results-oriented discussion with editorial content, guest blogs, a discussion board and a Hall of Fame for those who exhibit the utmost in professional courtesy.

"If people stop thinking about professional courtesy, it will go away," Jones said. "I want people to just think about it, their behavior. Did I say thank you? Did I treat that person the way I'd want to be treated?"

Barb Buettin, 50, a customer relationships manager at Chico's FAS in south Fort Myers, reads RediscoverCourtesy.org, posts her own comments and sends links to Jones' blogs to her friends and associates on Facebook and LinkedIn, a social networking site and a business networking site, respectively.

When Randall Kenneth Jones agreed to discuss his latest work, he wanted to meet in person.

He confirmed the day, time and location by email, he arrived early at the Starbucks cafe in Naples to grab a table and he even ordered ahead.

That kind of personal, professional behavior is his status quo. If everyone used good manners, work would be not only more pleasant, but easier, said Jones, 49.

And who doesn't want more ease in their work lives?

"The adage of 'it's just business' – I cannot accept that the concept should ever apply," said Jones, a Naples marketing company owner, humorist, speaker, editorial writer and actor.

Jones' blogs are funny and entertaining, yet drive home a point.

"The things he writes make me think of experiences I've had," Buettin said. "He reminds me to be forgiving and tolerant, versus short and fast, which is the environment we're in because we're all so busy."



Rachel Roberts learns the benefits of face-to-face communication from Randall Kenneth Jones. / Special to Coastal Life

More information

Visit RediscoverCourtesy.org or email randy@mindzoo.com.

In his first blog, "Because Oprah Told Me To," Jones follows the talk show queen's advice and discusses his passion. He writes humorously about manners, from his Southern gentleman roots in Missouri to refraining from answering an IHOP waitress' "how is everything?" with a mouthful of pancakes.

One of the biggest culprits is using email over a phone call or face-to-face contact, as well as curt emails, angry emails and unclear emails -- even not replying with an email when an email discussion has been underway and duties have been agreed upon.

"When I was growing up, it was the height of rudeness to not return a phone call," Jones said.

Taking ownership, pride and responsibility in your projects and willingly admitting your mistakes is another way to step it up at the workplace.

"I think people hide behind technology and say things they wouldn't ordinarily say," Buettin said about email communication.

Waiting for a return email or return phone call to receive the information you need to complete your task wastes a lot of time. Professionals can be more proactive with each other by sending updates about how far along they are on their end of a task so there's not so much time spent reminding each other. It's only polite.

"All people want is the peace of mind to know they haven't been forgotten," Jones said. "Proactively

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communicating with people gives them that peace of mind."

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