

Please, say thank you

BY: JEAN GRUSS | EDITOR/LEE-COLLIER



Randall Kenneth Jones, president of MindZoo, hired a monkey and his handler for a company party.

Randall Kenneth Jones says there's money to be made by being courteous. You can thank him later.

Randall Kenneth Jones says there's money to be made teaching people to be courteous, for himself and others.

Jones, who moved his marketing firm MindZoo from the Washington, D.C., area to Collier County in 2009, is on a mission to promote courtesy in the workplace.

Jones launched a website in November called RediscoverCourtesy.org that includes humorous videos about workplace faux pas. He created the website because he says there's a lack of civility that doesn't get the attention it deserves. "You'll read about it here and there, but there's no ongoing discussion," he says.

The website has been featured on business-news channel CNBC and the Marketplace program on public radio. Jones' point: When people are courteous to one another, they become more creative and successful.

Courtesy is a great employee motivator, he says. "You want to incentivize them to work harder," Jones says. He cites this personal example: One of his bosses greeted all 25 employees personally every morning, showing genuine interest in them.

Jones, 49, says the lack of courtesy is especially prevalent among the younger Generation Y workers who prefer to communicate via the Internet, even if they're sitting close to one another. "They don't talk to each other," he says. "Younger people need more mentoring."

But it's not just younger folks who aren't courteous, and there are many reasons for the scarcity of courtesy, including huge

workloads and fear of losing one's job. "There's a lot of fear, so people put up with it," he says. "Fear cripples creativity."

Jones' mission is both personal and for profit. The publicity that his courtesy project generates could lead to new clients for MindZoo and he uses RediscoverCourtesy.org to show clients how important content is to their websites. "I want my business to stand for something," he says.

The courtesy project could also help him develop seminars to discuss the issue at companies seeking to create a more courteous environment. "The way to monetize this is through public speaking," he says. "What I'm teaching isn't complicated. It's the Golden Rule."

Jones says he recently was invited to speak on the subject of courtesy at a corporate function in Orlando, though he declines to say how much he charges. "I don't charge enough," he quips.

Jones says he's careful not to define the rules of courtesy. "I don't have all the answers," he says. "I want people to think."

For example, one video on his website shows a man and a woman attending a conference. Both have nametags on lanyards around their necks, but the woman's tag is turned over so he can't see her name. The man reaches in to turn it around for her and she slaps him because the tag hangs around her chest.

While most people would think that the video portrays an issue of inappropriate touching by the man, Jones suggests that it's the woman who is at fault because she purposefully turned over her nametag. She thinks she's so important people should know her name without looking at a tag. "It makes for a phenomenal discussion," Jones says.