

Always do the right thing - even if you think it doesn't matter...

by Sandy Geroux

How often do you find yourself in the situation where you're asking yourself, "*Why did I agree to this? I'm not getting paid for this, so why should I bother going 'whole hog'? I'll just do enough to get by*" or "*Forget it; I can't get it all done!*"

Even more importantly (and more stressful), how many times have you had to pick up the slack for someone else who has apparently made the decision *not* to do something they promised to do, but hasn't informed others of their decision? Whether we're sitting on a Board, serving on a committee, or simply doing a favor, someone is counting on us to do what we promise. If we don't, we cause added stress for everyone else involved.

I've heard a lot of excuses when it comes to why people don't keep their promises, including the fact that "*I've gotten very busy at work*" and "*I can't get reliable transportation.*" While these are stressful situations, they do not excuse us from keeping our promises, or from at least finding a replacement who can keep those promises for us. It is never acceptable to just drop the ball and let everyone else deal with the fall-out. But it is acceptable to call a friend, family member, co-worker, fellow board member (whoever might be able to help) and ask them to lend a helping hand until we can return and keep the rest of the promise.

This holds true in many areas in our lives. Many of us join networking and leads groups to further our careers and make our presence known in our markets, or to help our communities.

- Do we make it a habit to arrive on time? To arrive at all? To fulfill our role, if any, that day?
- Do we habitually leave early?
- If we do have to miss a meeting, do we let someone know - or just "no show"?
- Do we take phone calls throughout the meeting (whether or not we leave the room to take the call)?

What inadvertent messages do we send with these actions? They could be interpreted to mean that we believe our time is more precious or important than that of other group members, that the group is not as important as callers trying to reach us, or that the other members of the group don't deserve the courtesy of a call if we're not going to show up.

While there are exceptions to every rule, extending as much courtesy as possible in every situation goes a long way toward establishing our reputation within our community. And while we all have occasional problems meeting commitments, there are ways to appropriately handle these situations, such as:



- Telling people ASAP if you will be out of commission for a while (even if you don't explain why, notifying them helps them plan)
- Helping them find replacements to take over your duties while you're away
- Not saying "yes" in the first place if you know you just can't do it (or do it well). Many times I've had no one to blame for my overloaded schedule but myself because I couldn't say "no." (I've now started saying "no" more often. I tell them, *"I am so flattered to be asked, but I know myself and I give 100% if I tell someone I'll do something. If I can't do the job well, I don't want to take it on and disappoint you – or myself. So, I'll have to decline for now, but please keep me in mind for the future."*)

It's unreasonable for any group to expect that we can always do what they want; most people understand this, so don't worry about offending others. It's acceptable to say "no." What is not acceptable is saying "yes", but then doing "no".

Here's one more thought to contemplate, and it concerns your reputation: If you don't do the right thing when it comes to "volunteer and/or networking" groups, and I *only* see you there (when it "doesn't matter"), how do I know you will - or even CAN - do the right thing when it *does* matter? I've met many people at networking events and on boards who want my business and referrals, but I would never feel comfortable referring them because of the way I see them behave with regard to those meetings. I just don't know enough of them elsewhere to do that... all I have to go on is what I see – and it often "ain't pretty!"

What messages do we want to send? We need to take a look at the inadvertent "bad" PR we could be creating in these situations... and start sending the right messages. People will notice and work with those who always (or at least usually) manage to do the right thing... even when they think it doesn't matter.

Remember: it ALWAYS matters.

With over 27 years of speaking and training experience, national speaker and author Sandy Geroux delivers motivational and educational programs to help "Turn Your Workplace Into a WOWplace™", helping organizations create WOW experiences for customers and employees alike by fostering a culture of trust, compassion and commitment to values, service and respect.

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