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## The Life of the Office

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Words from the Wise

*"I am reminded how hollow the label of leadership sometimes is and how heroic followership can be."*

- Warren Bennis

By Jeff Davidson

Here are 12 tips to help you be the kind of co-worker that other people want to be around:

1. **Avoid making promises you can't keep.** It would be better to under-promise and over-deliver than to over-promise and under-deliver. You already know this.
2. **As much as possible, maintain a cheerful disposition, even smile at people.** They don't have to do anything for you, and you don't have to be seeking anything. A smile is simply a smile.
3. **Be as good a listener as you can.** The typical person, when polled, thinks he or she is a good listener. The reality is that most people aren't. To be a better listener, look directly at others when they speak; offer your undivided attention; nod to show you're listening; don't interrupt; and if the setting warrants it, even take notes!
4. **Strive to treat others in your workplace with respect, independent of their rank or status within the organization.** This means that you treat employees who just began with the organization all the way up to your CEO with deference. After all, the self worth of an individual can't be determined by rank. People are worthy simply for being human beings.
5. **Look for the best in others.** When Will Rogers said, "I never met a man I didn't like," do you think that he meant that literally? I don't. I think he meant he never met someone about whom he couldn't find something he admired. Everyone does something in which you can find approval. Look for the good in others, and they'll look for the good in you.
6. **Avoid participating in the rumor mill.** Nothing dampens the morale and spirit of an organization faster than spreading stories about others, most of which are barely true. Yes, I understand it's titillating to speak clandestinely of others, particularly of higher-ups in the organization. Spreading rumors and gossip diminishes you as a person. If you ever stopped to think about why you engage in spreading rumors, it's usually because you have nothing better to do.
7. **When something goes wrong, take responsibility for your own actions rather than attempting to dole out parcels of blame in perfectly calculated packages.** The truth wins out most of the time, anyway, and people will know who was responsible when things don't go according to plan. Conversely,

seek to get credit for your group rather than yourself when some major success is achieved. The people who are promoted most readily are those who seek credit for the group.

8. **Avoid making decisions in anger.** The chances are great that these won't be the best, or even good, decisions. Recall that Dr. Hans Selye said that when under stress, it's not a question of if you'll make bad choices — you *will* make bad choices.
  
9. **Try not to get upset about things people say about you, particularly when they're untrue.** Demonstrate through your actions that such comments are not correct. Let negative comments fall away, like water off the proverbial duck's back.
  
10. **Avoid spilling your guts whenever you feel like doing so.** Those who are able to fathom the storms in their organizations realize that it often makes sense to say less than they are thinking. By this, I don't mean to advocate that you be coy or deceptive, but rather dispense your thoughts or observations with careful measure. You'll feel better about yourself, and things will go better for you in the long run.
  
11. **Follow the old adage: praise in public, scold in private.** If you have something that is worthy to say about someone else, by all means, feel free to say it within the earshot of others. Conversely, if you need to be critical of another, it's best done behind closed doors. No one likes to be criticized, or worse, "chewed out" within the earshot of others.
  
12. **Last, and perhaps most important, stay in control of your emotions.** Be known as one who makes decisions after having first thought them through. Regardless of what kind of bosses you may be subjected to, what type of working conditions you may have to endure, and what types of pressures confront you on a daily basis, lashing out at others is seldom, if ever, warranted. Conversely, those who maintain an even tempered, congenial disposition towards others are least likely to be involved in a workplace incident.

#### **About the Author**

*Jeff Davidson, CMC, MBA, is The Work-Life Balance Expert®. A speaker at many large companies, Jeff believes that career professionals today in all industries have a responsibility to achieve their own sense of work-life balance. He supports this quest through his websites [www.BreathingSpace.com](http://www.BreathingSpace.com) and [www.Work-LifeBalance.net](http://www.Work-LifeBalance.net). Jeff can be reached at [jeff@breathingspace.com](mailto:jeff@breathingspace.com)*