

LINDA KAPLAN THALER & ROBIN KOVAL

THE US BESTSELLER

The



POWER

of
NICE

How to Conquer the Business World with Kindness

'If you want to discover the surprising power of nice, read this book.
Memorize it. Use it. You'll be glad you did.' **DONALD TRUMP**

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ABOUT THE BOOK

Nice guts finish last. Or do they?

Linda Kaplan Thaler and Robin Koval's New York Times bestseller, *The Power of Nice*, shows how a little kindness goes a long way - in both business and your personal life. Discover the surprising power of Nice with an array of real-life examples from both the business arena and everyday life.

-Nice companies have a lower employee turnover, lower recruitment costs and higher productivity.

-Nice people live longer, are healthier and make more money.

Filled with inspiration and suggestions on how to supercharge your career and expand your reach in the workplace, *The Power of Nice* will transform how you live and work.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

LINDA KAPLAN THALER is the CEO and Chief Creative Officer and ROBIN KOVAL is the President of The Kaplan Thaler Group. The company is ranked as one of the fastest-growing advertising agencies in the United States. Kaplan Thaler and Koval are the co-authors of the US bestselling titles *Bang!* and *The Power of Small*. Together they have been featured in *USA Today*, the *New York Times* and *Business Week*. Kaplan Thaler and Koval both live in New York.

www.thepowerofsmallbook.com

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The
POWER
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NICE

How to Conquer the Business World with Kindness

LINDA KAPLAN THALER & ROBIN KOVAL

FORWARD BY JAY LENO



To my parents, Bertha and Marvin,
for teaching me the value of
kindness.

—*Linda Kaplan Thaler*

To my sister, Joyce, a woman born
with
the power of nice in her heart.

—*Robin Koval*

Foreword



BY JAY LENO

To me, one of the greatest books ever written is Charles Dickens's *A Christmas Carol*. Why? Because of its simple premise: Doing the right thing makes you feel better. It's not a religious thing. It's just that doing good things will improve your life. Let's face it, you cannot eat the whole pie or you'll make yourself sick. Eat some, and then give whatever is left over to other people.

When I was asked to be interviewed for *The Power of Nice*, I said yes not just because I wanted to be nice. I did so because I think it's the right way to be. But today being nice is so surprising it becomes a news story. I recently told a joke on the show and got a letter from a woman saying she was offended by it. I called her to apologize and say that I was sorry if I hurt her feelings. For some reason, she contacted the newspapers, and my apology became headline news! We live in a society where common courtesy is so *uncommon* that it is treated as though you just saved someone's life by giving them the Heimlich maneuver.

Even if you get into an auto accident, insurance companies will tell you not to apologize. It's an admission of guilt. So what do they want you to do? Run away and call your attorney? Yet, my guess is that if it's your fault and you do apologize, nine times out of ten people will be grateful and probably nicer back about getting the damage

repaired. So many of today's problems can be solved with simple acts of kindness.

Being nice is especially important when you have a platform like *The Tonight Show*. It can't be a bully pulpit or an ego booster. There's a reason the show is called *The Tonight Show with Jay Leno* instead of *The Tonight Show Starring Jay Leno*. It's because of my mother. She thought saying, "Starring Jay Leno" would tell audiences, "Oh, look at me, I'm a Big Shot." So I said to her, "Okay, Ma. How about 'with Jay Leno'?"

Life is not that hard. Try giving a little. You would be surprised at how much you get back.

Chapter 1

The Power of Nice



For years, we have loved a particular security guard in our Manhattan office building. In fact, most of us at The Kaplan Thaler Group think the world of him. A large, jovial man in his mid-fifties, Frank brightens people's days by giving everyone who walks into our building a huge, warm greeting. "Hello, Linda!" "Hello, Robin!" he'll say. "Happy Friday!"

Frank's engaging banter changed the way we started work in the morning. Instead of simply flashing our passes anonymously and making a beeline for the elevator, we found ourselves seeking out Frank and making sure to say hello. He set a positive tone for the entire day. But we never considered how Frank might be helping our business, other than preventing intruders from entering the premises.

That is, until the day Richard Davis, the president and COO of U.S. Bank, the sixth-largest bank in the United States, came to see us. For months, our entire team at The Kaplan Thaler Group had been working to create a pitch that would wow Davis and win us the huge U.S. Bank account.

At the time of Davis's visit, it was down to the wire. We were one of two agencies still in the running for the account. Davis and his team were flying in from their executive offices in Minneapolis to meet personally with us.

We didn't realize it at the time, but in fact Davis and his staff were a bit apprehensive about the kind of treatment they'd get in New York City. The furious pace and hard-bitten "out of my way" attitude of the Big Apple had become part of the mythology of the city. They were afraid we would be too cold, too aloof.

But when Richard Davis and his team walked into our building, they received a warm, enthusiastic greeting from Frank. When Davis reached our offices a few minutes later, he was gushing about the friendly security guard. "This guy gave me a huge hello!" he said. "And all of a sudden, I thought how could I *not* want to work with a company that has someone like Frank? How can I feel anything but good about hiring an agency like that?" We won the account.

Of course, Davis wouldn't have awarded us the job if he wasn't impressed with our work. But we've gotta give Frank credit. With a multimillion-dollar account in the balance, it was Frank's warm hello that helped us cinch the deal.

That is the power of nice.

The security guard wins the heart of the COO. It might sound like a Disney movie, but we can assure you it was no fantasy. We wrote *The Power of Nice* because we completely disagreed with the conventional wisdom that "Nice guys finish last" and "No good deed goes unpunished." Our culture has helped to propagate the myth of social Darwinism—of survival of the fittest—that the cutthroat "me vs. you" philosophy wins the day. One of the biggest-selling career books in the past few years is called *Nice Girls Don't Get the Corner Office*. Yet this completely contradicts the way we have run our business and our lives. In less than a decade, we built The Kaplan Thaler Group into a powerhouse in advertising with close to \$1 billion in billings, making it one of the nation's fastest-growing advertising agencies. Our success was won not with

pitchforks and spears, but with flowers and chocolates. Our growth is the result not of fear and intimidation, but of smiles and compliments.

Time and time again, we have seen the extraordinary power of nice in our business dealings and in our personal lives. It is the patient passenger who politely asks the airline ticket agent to please check one more time who gets the first-class upgrade, rather than the “I’m a triple platinum member” blowhard. It is the driver who is polite and apologetic to the police officer who sometimes is forgiven for driving over the speed limit.

But nice has an image problem. Nice gets no respect. To be labeled “nice” usually means the other person has little else positive to say about you. To be nice is to be considered Pollyanna and passive, wimpy, and Milquetoast. Let us be clear: *Nice is not naïve*. Nice does not mean smiling blandly while others walk all over you. Nice does not mean being a doormat. In fact, we would argue that *nice is the toughest four-letter word you’ll ever hear*. It means moving forward with the clear-eyed confidence that comes from knowing that being very nice and placing other people’s needs on the same level as your own will get you everything you want. Think about it:

- *Nice is luckier in love*. People who are low-key and congenial have one-half the divorce rate of the general population, says a University of Toronto study.^{[1](#)}
- *Nice makes more money*. According to Professor Daniel Goleman, who conducted research on how emotions affect the workplace for his book *Primal Leadership*, there is a direct correlation between employee morale and the bottom line. One study found that every 2 percent increase in the service climate—that is, the general cheerfulness and