

## Rudeness Hurts Business

Glen can't stand repeating himself. If he has to say something twice, his voice takes on a sharp edge and the third time will definitely include a "screw you!" Harry tells me that his employees understand that when he yells he isn't really being disrespectful, just frustrated. Frank admits that he tells his administrator to, "Stop being so dense and listen!"

I'm tempted to say that these guys are just being jerks, but research shows that if you observe someone being rude like that toward someone else, your productivity will decrease; and the purpose of these newsletters is to increase your productive potential not inhibit it.

The research on this is interesting. In a controlled study, one set of participants observed someone show up late for an experiment and apologize. They explained that a class across campus was not let out on time. After they were dismissed for being late, the researcher broke into a stream of criticism about students being unprofessional compared with those at other universities. A control group saw only a colleague being dismissed for being too late.

In a second experiment a small, easy-to-miss sign was posted on a partially closed door. A researcher seated at a desk greeted participants by saying "Can't you read? There is a sign on the door that tells you the experiment will be in (another room). But you didn't even bother to look at the door, did you? Instead, you preferred to disturb me and ask for directions when you can clearly see that I am busy. I am not a secretary here, I am a busy professor." Members of a control group were simply told that the room had been changed and given directions to the new location.

The students who were treated rudely, solved fewer anagrams, recalled less information and suggested less creative solutions to a question. Participants' willingness to help was also tested by having the experimenter drop books or pencils. Those who had experienced the rude behavior picked up fewer books and pencils, if they chipped in to help at all.

Robert Sutton, a Stanford University professor of management science and engineering and author of the book "The No Asshole Rule," said the study provides "some of the strongest evidence I've seen that mean-spirited behavior can undermine productivity and creativity. This well-crafted research shows that when organizations allow rude employees to run roughshod over others, it not only creates uncivilized workplaces, it is just plain bad business."

Is the rude employee in your office sometimes you? Are you trying to cut it back but find it keeps breaking out during moments of stress? Do others say you're too hard, but you think it's the way to motivate people? Remember the effects of observing rudeness will disturb your clients as well as employees. Give us a call today for an evaluation of your need to reform your approach. We won't turn you into a wimp, but we do have some straightforward ideas to smooth a few edges and increase productivity.