

BOOK PROPOSAL:

Nice Guy Strategies:

Nice is Not Enough: Nice Guy Strategies for Business Success

Synopsis

Myth or reality... Do nice guys really “finish last”? Can nice guys succeed in business? Must one surrender one’s “niceness” in order to secure the coveted corner office and a rich compensation package? What does “nice” really mean? More pointedly, **does success in business come at the cost of being nice?**

This is the question that Nice Guy Strategies founder, Russ Edelman, posed to Jack and Suzy Welch when they were making a joint public appearance. Russ approached them and explained his premise: Can guys who are “too nice” achieve higher degrees of success in business if they overcome what is sometimes called the Nice Guy Syndrome?

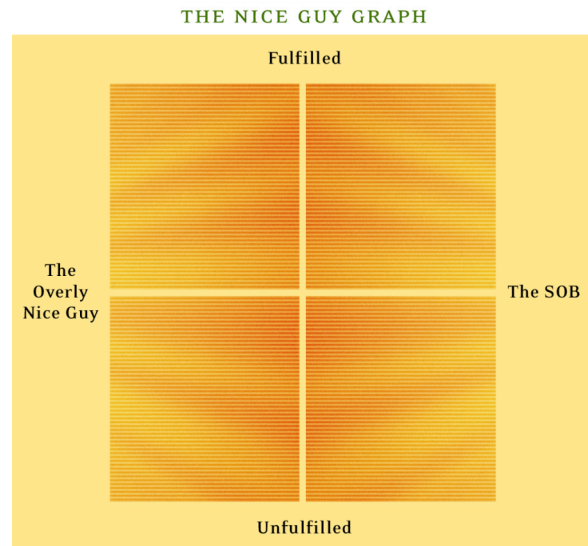
While some have written about this syndrome from a romantic or relationship perspective, no book has yet been written that addresses these issues purely from a business perspective. The past year, however, has seen the increase in visibility of “niceness” as an issue in a business context. A recently published book argues that SOBs should be nicer; it doesn’t address the need for “Nice Guys” to overcome the Nice Guy Syndrome to achieve more business success. The Welch’s saw this important distinction and directed Russ to the Harvard Business Review to expand upon his theories regarding the topic. In February 2006, “The Nice Guy” article appeared in HBR, authored by Russ and Nice Guy Strategies (NGS) co-founder Tim Hiltabiddle. The four commentators on “The Nice Guy” included Google CEO Eric Schmidt, best-selling author Stephen R. Covey, author/executive coach Maggie Craddock, and AVI North America’s Chairman and CEO, Don Manvel.

The ability to remain nice and achieve success in business is a complex, on-going challenge for a huge segment of the working world. Whether male or female, white collar or blue collar, American or foreign, professionals struggle to find a balance that works.

What is “nice”?

We think it’s important to reclaim and redefine the word “nice” and “nice guy.” “Nice” includes many positive attributes, including kindness, morals, fairness, common sense, compassion, empathy, ethics, selflessness, and sincerity. It is NOT about being weak or soft.

The old definition of nice (or “overly nice”) applies when someone shows a tendency towards weakness, “wimpiness”, passivity, softness, and docility. By contrast, the “SOB” personifies aggression, selfishness, intimidation, narcissism, and impatience.



Overly nice or an SOB – extreme leanings towards either of these attributes can limit one’s success. On the one hand, if you are too selfless you may fail to protect your interests and forsake financial rewards and advancement that you deserve; on the other hand, the short-term gains achieved by selfishness, intimidation, and intense aggression frequently lead to long-term failures for the individual and the team.

What is “success in business”?

Some describe business success in terms of money, power, and ambition. Others define it as “making a difference,” working on stimulating projects, or achieving a healthy work-life balance. While there are as many definitions as there are people, the bottom line for any individual is: are my needs—as well as the needs of others—being fulfilled?

In fact, overly Nice Guys can learn many lessons from SOBs, and vice-versa. They can adapt in constructive ways. The key to long-term success lies in finding a balance between the extremes

of being an SOB and overly nice. In *Nice Guy Strategies*, we will share 10 important strategies—**The Nice Guy Bill of Rights**—that will help businesspeople achieve that balance.

The NGS Bill of Rights

The NGS Bill Of Rights consists of ten rights (and corresponding strategies) that can help you change your perceptions and behaviors, meet challenges, and transcend perceived limitations. If you are overly nice, embracing these rights and learning these strategies will serve you well. In contrast, if you tend towards behaving like an SOB, you are encouraged to reduce the intensity with which you claim these rights. The 10 rights are as follows:

You have the right to:

Speak Up Learn to express your opinions and be heard	Value Your Time Learn to value your time and ensure it is respected by others
Self Awareness Learn your own strengths & weaknesses	Expect Results Learn to hold others and yourself accountable
Set Boundaries Learn to set clear, strong, and appropriate boundaries	Be Bold Learn to take chances and push the envelope
Challenge Learn to confront issues directly and without fear	Take Action Learn to act upon initiatives that you value
Choose Learn to make choices without guilt	Win Learn how to finish first respectfully and fairly

Interviews

Nice Guy Strategies is based, in part, on a series of organizational interviews that provide stories and qualitative data from a range of business professionals.

We began with a set of key thought leaders and C-level executives, a group that we refer to as “Celebrity Executives,” to obtain their perspectives on Nice Guys in business. They have either been interviewed by NGS or provided their commentary in the HBR article. They include:

- 1) Herb Kelleher, Founder of Southwest Airlines
- 2) John Pepper, former CEO of Proctor and Gamble, Chairman of Disney
- 3) Aaron Spencer, founder of Pizzeria Uno
- 4) Daniel Lamarre, President & COO of Cirque Du Soleil
- 5) Bill Allen, President & CEO of The Outback Steakhouse
- 6) Dr. John Seffrin, CEO, American Cancer Society
- 7) John Bogle, Founder of The Vanguard
- 8) Terry Stinson, former CEO of Bell Helicopter
- 9) George Naddaff, founder of Boston Chicken/Market
- 10) Doug Walker, founder of REI Sports
- 11) Ron Shaich, founder of Panera Bread and Au Bon Pain
- 12) Joseph O’Donnell, Founder of Boston Culinary Group
- 13) Maggie Craddock, Author of “The Authentic Career”
- 14) Eric Schmidt, CEO of Google
- 15) Steven Covey, Author of 7 Habits of Highly Effective People
- 16) Don Manvel, CEO of AVI North America
- 17) Jeff Taylor, Founder of Monster.COM
- 18) George Gendron, Editor In Chief – Inc. Magazine
- 19) Jim Turley, CEO – Ernst & Young
- 20) Sam DiPiazza, PWC

These executives and thought leaders are keenly interested in Nice Guy Strategies and believe many of the challenges they have personally observed and experienced within their organizations directly relate to “nice guy” issues. In these interviews and commentaries, they share some of their successes, failures, and strategies for helping Nice Guys succeed. Many of them have agreed to refer us to their peers at companies including Boeing, Starbucks, MGM, Xerox, HP, Microsoft and Costco

In addition to these executives, we are interviewing and surveying thousands of regular Nice Guy professionals. Our research will help uncover the many challenges Nice Guys face in the business world and provide us with stories to illuminate the issues, as well as statistical data from surveys and interviews to provide a quantitative perspective on the many dimensions of the Nice Guy Syndrome.

The Book's Composition

Each chapter of the book is devoted to one of the 10 rights in The NGS Bill of Rights and their corresponding strategies. Within each chapter, we will share stories from normal nice guys and celebrity executives along with relevant and meaningful insights. As an extension of the stories, we will also include statistics from our Nice Guy surveys that highlight key trends and patterns of behavior. Each chapter will include:

NICE GUY SYNDROME: The Dilemma

First, we summarize the high-level challenges associated with each Right. This overview provides a glimpse into how Nice Guys find it difficult to successfully claim that specific right.

Nice Guy Stories – Each chapter begins with several real-life stories that are related to the specific principle or “Right.” These stories are gleaned from our wide range of interviews with Nice Guys—white-collar and blue-collar, executive and mid-level managerial.

Nice Guy Motivations - At the conclusion of each chapter's story or stories, we assess the motives for a person's behavior and indicate how a Nice Guy might justify his or her actions.

Nice Guy Symptoms – We then identify the key symptoms of the Nice Guy Syndrome for this right and indicate how it may contribute to negative outcomes.

NICE GUY STRATEGIES: Strategies for Success

We will then introduce the corresponding strategies for each right, including: 1) feedback regarding how situations could have been handled more effectively, 2) advice and prescriptions for readers who may experience similar challenges, 3) additional insight and stories from well-known corporate executives and consultants, and 4) relevant data from various surveys and interviews.

THE NICE COMPANY: Making the Organization More Successful

In this section of each chapter, we explore the importance of organizations providing healthy support and encouragement of practices that are considered “Successfully Nice”. We will emphasize how managers and non-managers can simultaneously influence their companies to achieve more success and create a more positive work environment when these “nice” practices are applied. For each Right, we show how being appropriately nice can yield greater success in that realm.

Author Profiles

Three of the principals of Nice Guy Strategies (NGS) will author this book.

Russ Edelman

Russ Edelman, the first “nice guy” and founder of NGS, has long been passionate about the importance of this topic. As a serial entrepreneur who has started and grown two successful technology-consulting companies, he is regularly exposed to business professionals at all levels. It is this exposure, as well his admitted status as a veteran Nice Guy, that has led him to formulate his preliminary thinking on the subject and ultimately to begin the exploration of and research for this endeavor. Mr. Edelman regularly speaks and writes on key business and technology trends for the finance and IT industries he serves. As a highly regarded analyst, he continually pushes the envelope in understanding, analyzing, and explaining key industry events to global constituencies. Mr. Edelman and NGS have been featured in the *Harvard Business Review* and in *The Christian Science Monitor*.

Charles C. Manz

Charles C. Manz, Ph.D. is the Nirenberg Chaired Professor of Leadership in the Isenberg School of Management at the University of Massachusetts and formerly a Marvin Bower Fellow at the Harvard Business School. He is a speaker, consultant, and bestselling author of 20 books including *Mastering Self-Leadership, 4th ed.*, *Fit to Lead*, *The New SuperLeadership*, *The Power of Failure*, Foreword Magazine best book-of-the-year Gold Award winner *Emotional Discipline*, and Stybel-Peabody National Book prize winning *SuperLeadership*. His work has been featured on radio and television and in *The Wall Street Journal*, *Fortune*, *U.S. News & World Report*, *Success*, *Psychology Today*, *Fast Company* and several other national publications. He has also authored over 200 articles and scholarly papers. His clients have included 3M, Ford, Xerox, General Motors, P&G, American Express, the Mayo Clinic, Banc One, the U.S. and Canadian governments, and many others.

Tim Hiltabiddle

Tim Hiltabiddle is an NGS Co-Founder and Partner and Chief Creative Officer in the highly regarded graphic design firm Milestone Marketing & Design. For over ten years, Milestone has been providing a wide variety of corporate communications and marketing strategies for many global companies and organizations, including Lego, ESPN, MIT, Adobe, SAP, Harvard University, the Veterans Administration, and R. R. Donnelley. Early in his career, Tim experienced the corporate world from the inside out, spending numerous years as a Nice Guy middle manager -- first in a Fortune 50 corporation, then in a leading software company. He eventually caught the entrepreneurial bug and struck out on his own by starting his own communications business. Mr. Hiltabiddle has received numerous industry awards, has been recognized in a variety of publications, and sits on several boards. He has an MFA from Yale University and a BSID from Ohio State University. Mr. Hiltabiddle and NGS have been featured in the *Harvard Business Review* and in *The Christian Science Monitor*.

Why the Nice Guy Strategies Series Will Succeed

After reviewing the competitive landscape, Nice Guy Strategies believes that an NGS book will succeed for of the following reasons:

The Nice Guy Concept Is Ubiquitous

English speakers understand the implications of phrases like “Nice guys finish last,” “No more Mr. Nice Guy,” and “Nice Guy Syndrome”, and can quickly enumerate the problems and virtues of being a “Nice Guy.”

Nice Guy Strategies Is Focused On Success In Business

While the struggles Nice Guys face in their personal lives and relationships have been well documented, the challenges they face in the business world have largely been ignored. People and organizations are collectively suffering from the effects of the Nice Guy Syndrome, with significant losses in productivity, satisfaction, and success. Nice Guy Strategies has the cure to the Nice Guy Syndrome in business.

We Offer A Uniquely Appealing Approach To The Topic

Most people want to believe they are inherently nice. We speak to that belief (and encourage it) but urge Nice Guys to develop skills to help them become more balanced with a higher level of assertiveness, confidence, and decisiveness - thereby achieving a higher degree of success and fulfillment in their professional (and personal) lives.

Real Stories And Insightful Strategies

An essential element of Nice Guy Strategies is the collection of first-person perspectives and real-world experiences from Celebrity Executives and normal Nice Guys. We weave these stories and strategies from business professionals into the fabric of the book to represent the successes and failures of Nice Guys in business.

Corporate Scandals Have Raised The Profile Of Business Ethics

The dot.com bust and the ongoing series of corporate scandals have heightened the world's sense of the importance of ethics in the business community. As a result, everyone from the front-line employee to the Chairman of the Board wants professionals who are ethically grounded, conscientious, and respectful of others. Nice Guy Strategies encourages and personifies these attributes and teaches the assertive balance they need to gain influence and succeed.

Competitive Assessment

The Nice Guy Competitive Landscape

Linda Kaplan Thaler and Robin Koval’s recent NYT bestseller, “The Power of Nice,” suggests that our topic has come of age. We believe that Nice Guy Strategies injects a note of pragmatism into Thaler and Koval’s idealistic formula and will thereby add a crucial realism and some informed “how to” guidance to the discussion. Beyond their book, there isn’t any direct competition for “Nice Guy Strategies.”

A representative sampling of books in the general area is presented below.

Preliminary Competitive Landscape Summary	
Book Title & Author	Publisher Date
<p>The Power of Nice (Linda Kaplan Thaler & Robin Koval) This book focuses specifically on helping SOBs become nicer. It does <i>not</i> speak to the issues faced by overly nice guys—a population that we believe is much more prevalent. Our book focuses upon helping people overcome the Nice Guy Syndrome, an issue of particular concern in today’s business world.</p>	<p>Doubleday 2006</p>
<p>The No Asshole Rule: Building a Civilized Workplace and Surviving One That Isn't (Robert I. Sutton) An in-your-face guide to help companies get rid of ‘assholes’ and avoid hiring them in the first place. This book is similar to “The Power of Nice” in that it encourages considerate, civilized behavior. The tone, however, is much cheekier. While this book is not focused on the plight of the overly nice guy, Sutton does seem to make a case for a book like ours in his introductory chapter. "Not only do I despise spineless and obsequious wimps," he says, "but there is good evidence that they damage organizations."</p>	<p>Warner Business 2007</p>
<p>No More Mr. Nice Guy (Robert Glover) This book, along with the next book, is focused predominantly on the Nice Guy Syndrome in the context of romantic relationships and/or personal relationships. While it does provide brief commentary on business, it does not include the celebrity executive interviews or quantitative research that will be incorporated into NGS publications.</p>	<p>Running Press Books 2003</p>

Preliminary Competitive Landscape Summary

Book Title & Author	Publisher Date
<p>Anxious To Please (<i>James Rapson & Craig English</i>) Rapson and English lay the groundwork for defining “nice” people and how they are afflicted by their anxiousness to please others. Once their definitions of nice/pleasing are established, they introduce semi-clinical terms such as “anxious attachment” which ties back to early childhood. The remainder of the book then focuses on their seven recommendations for overcoming the complexities associated with over-pleasers. As is the case with other books of this genre, the emphasis is once again on emotional, family and romance related issues related to being an over pleaser. A few business examples are given, but they represent only a small portion of the book. It is our opinion that this book does not represent substantial competition.</p>	Sourcebooks 2006
<p>The Disease To Please (<i>Harriett B. Braiker, Ph. D.</i>) The New York Times Best Seller book allowed Dr. Braiker to delve deeply into the many motives that drive nice people to be consumed by pleasing others. Her theories are sound and, in many cases, are consistent with the message of Nice Guy Strategies. The majority of the content, however, is geared towards emotional, family and relationship oriented challenges.</p>	McGraw-Hill 2001

Book Cover Blurbs

“Tyrannical managers step aside! Nice Guy Strategies nails it with this book as they explain a new economy that combines Nice and Successful. Excellent work!”

– BILL ALLEN, CEO, Outback Restaurants

“This book is very timely and insightful. As our world evolves and team spirit becomes more and more important, we need leaders with a human approach to business. Nice Guy Strategies helps cultivate strong leaders with these essential qualities.”

– Daniel LaMarre, President & CEO, Cirque du Soleil

“Nice guys can be as strong as lions and as sly as foxes! Finally, a book that teaches nice guys how to be strong, decisive, and get things done much more efficiently and successfully than tyrannical managers.”

– GEORGE NADAFF, Founder & Former CEO, Boston Chicken

“This book is very timely and much needed. As an executive coach, I’m frequently brought in to help smart, nice guys who are feeling professionally frustrated in corporate cultures that unwittingly reward people who “take” rather than people who collaborate. It’s time for a book that will help such men protect their personal power so they can succeed without sacrificing their best qualities.”

– MAGGIE CRADDOCK, President, Workplace Solutions, Inc., and Author of “The Authentic Career”

Alternative Book Titles

Mr. Nice Guy No More

Moving To Center

Nice Guys Finish First

Nice Guy, Tough Guy

Nice In Business: The Obstacle...The Goal

The Business of Balance

Nice Only Gets You So Far In Business - Find Out How To Go All The Way

The New Nice

Chapter Summaries

An Introduction:

Nice Guys In Business?

We reject the notion that “nice guys finish last.” People that are *too* nice, however, often struggle. This issue is a familiar one for many people as it relates to social and romantic situations, but it also applies to the business world. Companies on every continent employ Nice Guys (and Gals, whom we include under the gender-neutral term “guys”) who struggle with the Nice Guy Syndrome. They simply don’t have the skills, tools, and wisdom to overcome it. As a result, they experience frustration and a lack of fulfillment as they (and their companies) fail to reach their potential.

OLD DEFINITION OF ‘NICE’

- Always trying to please others
- Valuing agreeableness over assertiveness
- Treating others “well” by giving away our own personal power
- Prioritizing catering to others demands and wants over truthfulness and authenticity
- Attempting to avoid and minimize disagreement, conflict and discomfort

NEW DEFINITION OF ‘NICE’

- Attempting to optimize outcomes for both others and ourselves
- Striving to balance assertiveness with cooperation to achieve a spirit of collaboration
- Honoring the value and personal power of others and ourselves
- Seeking the best results for everyone involved by emphasizing truthfulness and authenticity
- Openly confronting challenges and disagreements and embracing the benefits of constructive conflict

With this book, we aim to reinforce the importance of and commitment to “Successfully Nice” while simultaneously teaching the virtues of not being overly nice. Bluntly speaking, Nice Guys can learn important lessons from the SOBs of the world (without becoming an SOB) while simultaneously retaining their inherent niceness. Through true stories, assessments, and recommendations, we set forth the strategies that will allow Nice Guys and their companies to enhance their success.

RIGHT 1:

You have the right to: *Speak Up*

Learn to express your opinions and be heard

To speak or not to speak? That is the first of many questions for nice guys in business. When to speak? To whom to speak? What to say? How to say it? These questions combine to make the seemingly simple act of putting thoughts into words feel like walking a verbal minefield.

Overly nice guys often prefer to remain silent rather than state their personal and managerial views or needs. They do so for a host of reasons, including the maintenance of the perceived well being of others, a fear of being judged, and struggles with feelings of unworthiness. In choosing silence or partial silence, however, overly nice guys may create bigger problems and challenges than they already face.

Consequently, the ability to articulate our thoughts – to “speak up” – is fundamental to personal and organizational business success. Unfortunately, it frequently is one of the overly nice guy’s greatest challenges. The ability to express your opinion to others can be very intimidating, whether an audience of one (such as a boss) or a multitude (such as at a large event.) Overly nice guys must claim the right to be heard, find the courage to speak up, and say what is needed.

RIGHT 2:

You have the right to: **Self Awareness**

Learn your own strengths & weaknesses

The truth shall set you free. A clear awareness of our own (and our team's) strengths and weaknesses along with an honest appraisal of the circumstances helps create a solid foundation from which informed choices can be made.

Sticking our heads in the sand is almost always counterproductive and often quite destructive. True self-awareness demands rigorous honesty, whether you're applying it to your own situation in particular or the plight of your company in general. Short term, it can be much easier to delude yourself—out of sight, out of mind. But long term, these delusions will inevitably have bad consequences. Confronting reality is hard work and demands hard choices.

The payoff can be significant for nice guys who practice self-awareness. Being honest about our own strengths and weaknesses encourages us to seek out people with complimentary skills, effectively offsetting our weaknesses. Self-awareness also reduces the need to feel defensive, since we will be among the first to recognize valid criticism and necessary change.

To be self aware, overly nice guys must develop a clear understanding of their own strengths and weaknesses, acknowledge their weaknesses without shame, welcome constructive criticism, rigorously seek truth, and live with integrity.

RIGHT 3:

You have the right to: **Set Boundaries**

Learn to set clear, strong, and appropriate boundaries

We believe that “it is better to give than to receive.” But when does giving become a liability in the business world? Overly nice guys continually wish to please others regardless of the impact that doing so may have upon them. To find the right balance, overly nice guys must set

boundaries for themselves and others. Otherwise, the giving never stops and reasonable boundaries are never established.

Nice Guys, and those with whom they interact, benefit when healthy boundaries are set. In this chapter, overly nice guys will understand how to set boundaries in a healthy and productive way, ensuring that their own interests (and those of others and the organization) are being equally and reasonably served. Boundaries vary in nature, so Nice Guys must astutely identify those that suit a particular person and situation. And when Nice Guys find their niceness is being abused, they must define, defend, and reinforce those reasonable boundaries.

RIGHT 4:

You have the right to: **Challenge**

Learn to confront issues directly and without fear

Confrontation is not a bad word. In fact, it is an important tool and can become a positive force for business success. It means getting issues and concerns out in the open and honestly addressing them. Some Nice Guys subconsciously avoid confrontation and hold to the old adage that “children should be seen and not heard.” Nice Guys may be idealistic, but they aren’t children. They needn’t be too nice and deferential, reluctant to deliver challenging news, or fearful of hurting the feelings of others.

Nice Guys tend to have a healthy amount of what experts call “emotional intelligence,” the capacity to recognize and be “in tune” with their own and others’ feelings. They tend to have innate sensitivity and empathy. This becomes an asset when direct, difficult, and candid communications are needed. New found courage blended with emotional intelligence can produce a Nice Guy who seeks positive outcomes for all participants.

Learning how to apply emotional intelligence to situations where confrontation is necessary is an important goal in this chapter. Nice Guys can learn to address issues directly and without fear

while embracing the importance of honesty and empathy. Their new tools and skills will help them effectively challenge others or, perhaps, choose to walk away.

RIGHT 5:

You have the right to: **Choose**

Learn to make choices without guilt

Successful Nice Guys consciously choose what they will do and won't do. Overly nice guys, by contrast, often fail to choose a path that is in their own best interests. They don't want to impose upon others and frequently will not put their own priorities first. They may perceive their actions as selfless, but truthfully these choices often stem from feelings of unworthiness. Overly nice guys may subconsciously feel that their needs are less important and consequently will make choices that they dislike and even resent. In the mid- to long-term, overly nice guys will "lose out" as they neglect their own best interests and instead give in to choices made by others.

This selfless behavior will typically lead the overly nice guy down a path of frustration and disappointment. In this chapter, we provide key insights for creating conditions that support balanced choices that help yield positive outcomes for the Nice Guy. Learning not to settle prematurely and proceeding only when terms meet one's needs are key learning points that are achieved in this section. Ultimately, saying "no" may be the best choice of all.

RIGHT 6:

You have the right to: **Value Your Time**

Learn to value your time and ensure that others respect it

Time is a valuable resource. Overly nice guys will frequently volunteer or abdicate too much of their time to others. Doing so introduces unnecessary stress, complexity, and dysfunction into business operations. In some cases, the overly nice guy wants to demonstrate that he or she is a team player; in other cases, he or she doesn't want to impose on others, express his or her true

priorities, or say “no.” As a result, the overly nice guy may inappropriately assume the burden of responsibility when it is not his or hers to bear.

In this chapter, we will first emphasize that time is an asset and then demonstrate how to protect it – avoiding the tendency to spend it randomly or carelessly during the business day. Techniques are introduced to demonstrate that time can be negotiated – just like a salary or business deal. While being a team player and not imposing on others are worthy goals, we explain how overly nice guys must achieve a realistic understanding of their resources and capacities. They should consciously set their own agenda and strive to avoid serving at the whim of others. And we will elaborate upon why Nice Guys should – by mutual agreement with their boss, peers, and team -- first define the process, goals, priorities, and parameters of success before committing to the investment of time. Time is valuable. Just as a business case must first be made before spending significant money, a solid business case should also be made before spending valuable time.

RIGHT 7:

You have the right to: *Expect Results*

Learn to hold others and yourself accountable

Nice Guys understand the importance of being accountable for their actions and holding others to their professional commitments. Overly nice guys typically deliver on the first half but falter on the second. They frequently let their co-workers off the hook when those individuals have promised something and then not fully delivered. This behavior often results in overly nice guys accepting sub-par work and/or completing it on their co-worker’s behalf. There may be a variety of excuses and explanations for the outcome. The bottom line, however, is the overly nice guy often has to pick up the ball that was dropped by someone else.

Accountability takes many forms: 1) Timeliness – are deadlines and commitments honored? 2) Quality – Are standards of quality being consistently delivered upon? 3) Integrity – are legal, fiscal and ethical standards upheld?

The business world cannot thrive if we don't hold others and ourselves accountable. In this chapter, we teach overly nice guys to define parameters and establish communication channels that ensure success and accountability with others. We offer techniques that demonstrate how Nice Guys can push others to remain accountable without assuming their responsibilities when things don't go as planned. This may entail a significant shift from past precedents. However, all participants will ultimately benefit.

RIGHT 8:

You have the right to: **Be Bold**

Learn to take chances and push the envelope

Most people prefer to operate within their comfort zone. They are less likely to rock the boat and create upheaval. Because of their deep understanding of human nature, Nice Guys can also appreciate the importance of those comfort zones, and will cultivate them both for themselves and others.

Yet significant growth often comes when we either push or are pushed out of our comfort zone. It can be hard to break out and find new opportunities for growth and change. To break out of the box, overly nice guys must find the motivation and courage to take risks, be they real or perceived. It is almost always better to aim high--boldly strive to achieve a goal and risk "failure"--than to sit on the sidelines and avoid trying in the first place.

Finding the motivation that is right for you is one of the most important aspects of taking bolder steps. We sometimes equate boldness with recklessness. In some cases, this is true. However, with thoughtful preparation and assessment boldness can be a healthy mindset. This allows overly nice guys to stretch their comfort zones in a reasonable way.

In this chapter, we provide the Nice Guy with key insights for aiming high and being prepared to risk "failure." We will help each reader find their unique motivations by helping them learn to

connect to their passions. Passion provides courage and moves you to take bold steps, especially for those who need to overcome tendencies that are associated with being safe, passive and overly nice. It's easier to take greater risks when you care deeply about the importance of the project, the process and the rewards – regardless of whether the goal is a new position, a new project, or a new idea.

RIGHT 9:

You have the right to: **Take Action**

Learn to act upon initiatives that you value

We believe everyone has the capacity to generate good ideas. Overly nice guys have this capacity, yet they often don't act quickly on their ideas—if they act at all. Overly nice guys want to avoid imposing on others or don't have the confidence to move forward, so their ideas frequently languish and die. This manifests itself as delays or inaction. The overly nice guy often feels compelled to ensure every aspect of a situation is explored, in detail, before he will proceed. Or he becomes paralyzed by perceived limitations—real or imagined—and stays stuck in neutral.

In this chapter, we introduce a number of techniques that can help overly nice guys take action. First, an action does not necessarily involve one massive effort. With a little planning, one can take small, measurable, incremental steps towards a desired outcome. Second, the burden of taking action need not fall 100% upon the Nice Guy's shoulders. He or she can boldly and confidently enlist the help of others in taking joint or complementary actions. Third, playing the "What If" game can help break down fears and create forward movement. When all of these techniques are combined, overly nice guys learn how to Take Action.

Right 10:

You have the right to: **Win**

Learn how to finish first respectfully and fairly

Business rewards those who have the right angle, the right commitment, and the right social skills to drive success. Sure, Nice Guys often “win”, but we believe they can win more often and in bigger ways, without compromising their ethics, self-respect and integrity.

Some people aren't comfortable with winning: they often feel guilty when placed squarely in a competitive situation that creates “winners” and “losers”. Whether because of competitive pressure, fear of sowing the seeds of future conflict, a sense of unworthiness, or concern over displacing or actually harming others, many overly nice guys will shun the limelight and the winner's circle. Overly Nice Guys want to see others succeed—which is noble—but when it's at the expense of their own success it doesn't serve the greater good.

To grow beyond this crucial symptom of the Nice Guy Syndrome and be successful, overly nice guys must learn to win, to be “Successfully Nice.” They can learn to assert themselves, little by little, and gradually gain the ability to win in bigger and bigger ways. The world is not served when talented people diminish their own talents and intelligence. Nice guys owe it to themselves (and to others) to do their best at all times.

In this chapter, we explore why it is acceptable and honorable for Nice Guys to end up on the winning side of the equation. While a win-win situation is ideal, Nice Guys should take pride in their wins even when someone else “loses”. We provide instruction and examples regarding how they can develop a comfort level that allows them to recognize and enjoy the virtues of winning. As Nice Guys apply the principles of excellence, decency, and fairness in their work, and embrace quality results, they encourage others to do better by setting the bar higher. When excellence is rewarded, everyone wins.

NICE GUY STRATEGIES: CHAPTER 1

You have the right to:

Speak Up

“Lord, what an organ is human speech when it is played by a master!”
– *Mark Twain*

“That deadly enemy of a man, his own tongue...”
– *Mark Twain*

“The difference between the *almost*-right word & the *right* word is really a large matter—it's the difference between the lightning bug & lightning.”
– *Mark Twain*

NICE GUY SYNDROME:

To Speak or Not To Speak?

To speak or not to speak? That is the first of many questions for nice guys in business. *When* to speak, to *whom* to speak, *what* to say, and *how* to say it are other questions that come into play. Combined, they often make the seemingly simple act of putting thoughts into words feel like the negotiation of a verbal minefield.

George Naddaff, founder of the incredibly successful Boston Chicken Franchise, elected not to speak up when he took his first job after coming back from the Korean War. Upon his return, his father presented him with two options, go to college or get a job. Since George was not too keen on college, he chose a “career” path. After scouring the papers, he found a job with requisite qualifications of someone interested in sales with a car. The job was a door-to-door sales position

for a distributor of a single product, a very advanced mechanical baby carriage. George paid \$75 for the “right to sell” the carriages and went out into the world without a clue as to how to sell them. The only direction he received from his new boss was to “find babies and sell the carriage”. After giving it some thought, he realized that he could walk through the alleys that adjoined row houses and look for diapers hanging on the clothes lines. He then noted those apartments and went to the front door to make his pitch. The next day, he delivered 7 orders and was immediately promoted to “sales manager”. George’s career with the carriage distributor advanced quickly and within a very short time, George was working directly for the manufacturer.

As his ascent accelerated, he approached the owners of the company and asked to become a partner in the business. They promised they would make him one if he continued his performance. As a Nice Guy, George took them at their word and didn’t speak up and ask for a contractual commitment, a thought that crossed his mind. Fifteen years later, George had built a huge sales organization with over 5,000 sales representatives achieving staggering results. When he went back to the owners to formalize his position in the company, they conveniently forgot the details of the negotiation and now required George to invest approximately 25 million dollars to be a co-owner in the business. Had George spoken up when the deal was originally consummated, he would have been a partner without the huge cost. He ultimately left to pursue other opportunities and this led him to the Boston Chicken franchise. His lesson as an overly Nice Guy was significant and now George always makes sure to speak up as needed.

Nice guys such as George often prefer to remain silent rather than state their personal and managerial views or needs. They do so for a host of reasons, including the maintenance of the perceived well being of others, a fear of being judged, and struggles with feelings of self-worth. In choosing silence, however, nice guys are likely to miss out on opportunities, advancement, and rewards that come to those who bring their thoughts and ideas forward. Speaking up in inappropriate, inaccurate or misguided ways, however, can create even bigger problems and challenges. From words come actions. From actions come ramifications – ramifications that run the gamut from good to bad.

THE STORIES

The following three stories illustrate a few of the ‘speak-up’ challenges that nice guys face in the business world: the first from the early career of a man who is now president of his own lighting company; the second from the founder of an educational services company; and the third from a senior manager in a well-known consulting firm. We have assigned pseudonyms throughout.

Each story is intentionally left open-ended – without resolution. What would *you* do? Would you speak up? What would you say? To whom would you speak? Why? It’s not always easy to discern what is ‘right’ or ‘wrong,’ and the ramifications of speaking up (or not speaking up) can be significant – not only for the nice guy, but also for those who are influenced and affected by the nice guy’s behavior and choices.

“Amway or the Highway”

Donald, a respected engineer, was Rick’s co-manager and a consistent contributor to the success of their department. Since financial bonuses were pooled, it was important that the team always perform at its peak. Rick respected Donald, but became concerned when he began overhearing phone conversations that clearly did not relate to business.

“Initially, I ignored the calls. Donald pulled his weight in sales and contributed to a positive work atmosphere. As the extracurricular phone traffic increased, though, I approached him about it. Without apologizing for the calls, he explained that he was involved in Amway, the largest multi-level marketing organization in the world. He offered me the opportunity to join him and invited me to attend a meeting.’

“In the course of this conversation, Donald had also explained that his commitment to Amway wasn't interfering with his performance at our company. Actually, he boasted that it helped motivate him to be a better team player. Since I hadn't noticed a fall off in his performance and since he seemed passionate about his new interest, I decided to give

him the benefit of the doubt. I even attended a meeting as his guest. While I was not persuaded to join Amway, I decided to let the issue lie.’

“A short time later, though, I was approached by a sales rep who serviced our supply house. Bob told me nervously that he needed my advice and described how Donald was recruiting him to join ‘the business opportunity of a lifetime!’ Bob was torn: he didn’t want to risk his relationship with Donald – sales might depend on it – by declining the invitation. What did I think he should do? I was mortified that Donald had violated basic business etiquette and company policy for his Amway commitment and began to wonder how many other vendors or even customers Donald had put in the same awkward position.”

Rick is in a difficult position, given that Donald is a peer and not a subordinate. He has already taken the first step in speaking up by going directly to Donald and discussing the issue with him, after which he was persuaded to ‘let the issue lie.’ Now that a vendor has been compromised, what should he do next? Go back to Donald and discuss it further? Go to the boss? Let it be?

“Confidential in Brazil”

Early in his career, Guillermo spent several years in investment banking in America. After a point, though, he became restless, and started a new educational services company in Brazil. He loved the range of challenges he faced but considered it his primary goal to make his people feel involved, happy, and productive. The result has been a successful organization that is now growing 25%-30% per year, after several years in operation. Yet despite Guillermo’s efforts to be open with his employees, the company’s first internal survey determined that employees didn’t feel senior management was communicating enough. One incident in particular sums up the problem for Guillermo.

“In February 2006, I fired my marketing director and his second in command because he told me he was having an affair with her and she was pregnant. I said: ‘You decided her

bonus, we've had a downsizing – the two of you chose who will go. This isn't right.' Firing them wasn't cheap, either: under Brazilian law and because of her pregnancy, I had to pay this female staffer a severance of 25 times her monthly salary. The two of them asked me, 'What are you going to say to everyone else?' I told them I wouldn't mention the pregnancy, because that was private; they had broken trust with the organization, and that was grounds enough. So I didn't speak up about the firings, which led to an outcry, with people saying I was being too tough."

Senior management 'isn't communicating enough' and is being 'too tough' due to the recent firing. Guillermo is striving to protect the privacy of employees, but his silence is beginning to compromise the integrity of his organization – and perpetuate an erroneous perception of his choices. Can he afford to keep mum any longer? How can he speak up in such a situation? What can he say?

“Green Card”

Peter is a senior manager at a well-known consulting firm. Last year he hired Juan, a recent immigrant to the United States. Juan was in the process of obtaining his green card for permanent residence in the United States, and management agreed that Juan would secure an H-1 visa while completing the long process associated with obtaining the green card. Juan had brought his whole family to the United States, so he was anxious that his application succeed.

Unfortunately, Peter soon realized that the quality of Juan's work was inconsistent, and that Juan himself lacked commitment. Juan often didn't complete his work as assigned and seemed unaware of the discrepancy. Peter knew that Juan's performance was putting a number of projects in jeopardy, but he hesitated to take any action, at least in part because of Juan's personal situation.

Peter meant well. He did a ‘nice’ thing for Juan by first giving him the job and then going through the green-card process on his behalf. And now, well down the road, Peter realizes he’s hired an employee whose inferior performance is negatively affecting the company. What can Peter say or do?

THE MOTIVES

There are perfectly good reasons to ‘be nice’ and choose to remain silent in each of these situations.

In Rick’s case, he feels loyalty to a member of his team who has been a strong performer. He could choose to avoid addressing Donald’s extra-curricular business interests because Donald still contributed effectively to the team.

Respect for the privacy of others is a priority for Guillermo. He chose not to reveal his female employee’s pregnancy and used the veil of professional confidentiality to mask his agenda.

Peter exhibits a strong concern for the professional and personal well-being of others. He recognizes the enormous cost to Juan if he loses his job – a cost not just his employment but also his family’s stability and long-range plans.

As motives go, these are all excellent reasons not to speak up. They explain why many of us consider ourselves Nice Guys and like to be considered as such by others. We’re fair, tolerant, compassionate, and willing to go the extra mile for a friend and colleague.

But we also know that these features can represent – and result in – ineffectual management, with very real consequences for us and for our organizations. This behavior, which ultimately results in a lack of effectiveness, leadership, and long-term success, is what we call the Nice Guy Syndrome.

THE SYMPTOMS

What are the symptoms of the Nice Guy Syndrome as related to “Speaking Up”? They are expressed through various acts, emotions, and behaviors.

Guillermo unintentionally masked his message and ultimately missed his target. His commitment to maintain the fired employees’ confidentiality ran counter to his desire to communicate openly with his employees. In seeking to strike a balance, he may have ended up sharing much less about his decision concerning why he let the employees go than he intended or even realized, leaving others in the firm to draw their own, largely dissatisfied, or even outraged conclusions.

Rob, Guillermo, and Peter – either consciously or unconsciously – all feared acting with decisive judgment. They all likely harbored a concern about how their colleagues would perceive decisive managerial action on their part. If they spoke up, would they look foolish or cause others to be angry with them?

All three men may have struggled with issues of ego and worthiness. Were they unsure about the validity of their managerial judgment and the value of their opinion? What if speaking up caused upset or even wrought havoc on others?

Perhaps they also equated silence with tact? Finding the right strategy for saying what needs to be said and the words to deliver a particular message can be harder than saying nothing at all. Nice guys like Guillermo therefore often opt for silence. But silence can be token tactlessness in the same way the wrong words can. Saying nothing can be seen as a lack of faith in the receiving party’s ability to listen, understand, and/or respond appropriately.

And, finally, one of the most challenging skills to learn in life is how to listen. It’s quite common to hear without really listening. Or perhaps we hear what we *want* to hear instead of what is actually being said. Rick’s first conversation with Donald was an example of this. Though Rick

did speak up by looking into the matter and asking questions of Donald, he wasn't moved to take serious action until Bob spoke up and essentially forced Rick to listen more attentively.

Many of us have seen similar behaviors in our colleagues and ourselves. They are the downside of being an overly nice guy. Until we address these tendencies within ourselves and develop the skills to overcome them, it is less likely that we will succeed at a high level.

NICE GUY STRATEGIES:

Speaking Up

The ability to articulate our thoughts – to “speak up” – is fundamental to business success. Unfortunately, it frequently is one of the Nice Guy’s greatest challenges. The ability to express your opinion to others – to an audience of one (such as a boss) or many (such as at a large event) – can be very intimidating.

Bill Allen, CEO of The Outback Steakhouse, learned the importance of speaking up at the beginning of his career. Bill landed his first ‘career’-oriented job as a dishwasher in a local country club. Upon summoning up the courage to knock on the back door of the country club restaurant to ask for a job, he was approached by the manager who asked him “how old are you?” Bill quickly replied, “How old do I need to be to get the job?” At age 13, he assumed the job of a “much older 14-year-old” when he entered the job market. A number of years later, through hard work and diligence, he advanced to become the manager of the country club’s restaurant. This position gave him his entry into the food services industry. He continued on this track and made steady progress with each step. Prior to assuming responsibility as the Outback’s President, he co-founded the highly regarded Fleming’s Steak House with renowned restaurateur, Paul Fleming (of PF Chang’s fame). Fleming’s was eventually acquired by The Outback and become one of their brands. Bill’s performance at Fleming’s served as the catalyst for him receiving the top spot at The Outback.

In one of his earlier food/beverage jobs with an international hotel chain, Bill regularly participated in “strategic” meetings regarding key initiatives at the hotels: “Back then,” he recalled, “the person with the longest title made the final decisions, even when he was unfamiliar with the topics being discussed. The company suffered from ‘death by committee,’ as *everyone* needed to participate in *every* meeting, which made them unduly bureaucratic and inefficient. For example, at a menu-planning meeting, executives from finance and real estate commented on

their preferences for blueberry cobbler as a menu offering. The first problem was that neither had any practical experience on the food side of the business, an area I knew well. The second and more relevant problem was that I elected not to speak up. As a result, the meetings were long and wasteful.”

In retrospect, Bill recognizes that he should have expressed his concerns directly to the meeting leader and confused executives. In general, he notes, “If the company does not support people speaking up for the benefit of the organization, then it is not a place where I want to work.” Ultimately, the environment led him to leave the hotel chain.

Why are some people able to summon the courage needed to speak up, while others shrink from the challenge?

Is this type of ‘courage’ something that can be learned? Can it be institutionalized and integrated into a corporate culture? Why are some people less effective at speaking up than others? Can these problems be overcome?

We say ‘yes’ to all of these questions. If you aim to be successful, you must step up and do what’s needed. Here are three key strategies that will help you do so.

SPEAK-UP STRATEGY #1: PREPARE

Preparation breeds confidence – confidence that will show when you speak to others. As part of your preparation, it’s helpful to develop a strategy that first determines which audience to target and then defines how best to address it – whether you’re making a cold call on the phone, approaching a celebrity keynote speaker after his or her speech, speaking with your boss about a difficult issue, working the room at a business cocktail party, raising a new idea at a staff meeting, or confronting a customer with a pressing concern. Speaking off the cuff or “winging it” rarely leads to concise, effective communication. Instead, set a clear intention for the conversation and prepare a thoughtful line of questioning that reflects that intention.

In so doing, remember that an informed viewpoint is worth infinitely more than an ignorant one. Rudy Giuliani, a lawyer and U.S. District Attorney before becoming Mayor of New York City, once said his first boss told him to spend four hours preparing for every one hour in court. If you do your homework, know the material, and get your facts straight, you'll be standing on solid ground. Your audience will sense it and likely offer their respect and attention in return.

Doing Away With S.W.A.G.

Alan, a VP of Development at a Midwest college, learned the hard way that "S.W.A.G." (Strategic Wild Ass Guesses) would not help him get the raise he wanted.

"I've worked for Bob, the college president, for more than five years, and I've realized that you need to speak up or you'll get run over.

"Bob loves to debate. It's his nature and it always made it difficult for me to speak up on issues – especially when it came to my salary review. In the past, I tried to cover the subject of compensation but never had much success. He always argued with me, and he always won.

"This year I tried something different. I decided to do extensive research on my salary compared to others at institutions similar to mine. I used our strategic plan to get a list our top competitors and then got salary information about my position at these institutions. I also used a human resources benchmark for other comparable institutions.

"I walked into the review, armed and dangerous. Guess what happened? When I shared the information at the appropriate time in the meeting, Bob was stunned. I was so prepared with good information – it completely caught him off guard! He couldn't argue with the facts. Speaking up is MUCH easier when you're prepared. It breeds

confidence. Good research and preparation equals good results. In my next check, it paid off handsomely.”

Did Peter thoroughly do his homework before he hired Juan? Perhaps a more rigorous check of his references would have brought to the surface the issues that now threaten to torpedo Juan’s employment (and U.S. residency).

SPEAK-UP STRATEGY #2: CALIBRATE

We see the world through our own filters – filters that are informed by our unique set of experiences, ideas, and values. This perception of the world creates our own personal reality. It’s natural. We’re human. But here’s the rub: invariably, we expect everyone else to think, feel, speak, act, and respond the way that we do. When they don’t, we are shocked. What is *wrong* with them? Why did they *say* that? Why didn’t they do it *my* way? Everyone has his or her *own* filters, perceptions, and reality ... that is why.

Gifted communicators understand this concept on a deep level. They do not expect others to be exactly like them. Instead, they aim to think like their target audience. They put themselves in other people’s shoes and strive to understand the alternative perspective, motivations, and desires. Tuning into the mood of specific individuals, the tenor of a given situation, and the specifics of the environment at hand generates invaluable information that must be reflected in the way you speak up.

Be creative and flexible. What approach will be most effective in this moment? Humor? Boldness? Deference? Should you make a serious statement or tell a whimsical story? Be aware of these factors, shift your perspective, and calibrate your approach accordingly. If your audience feels understood, respected, and engaged in an appropriate way, your chances of success increase dramatically.

Sloppy calibration often leads to misdirected communication, frustration and even anger. Has a scolding by your boss ever caused you to “speak up” inappropriately by lashing out at one of your peers or employees? If you ‘miss the target’ and are unwilling or unable to speak directly to the sources of your frustration, your anger is likely to seep out in a stream of petty complaints and resentments that are destructive and often disrespectful towards others.

Save Your Bullets

Jay has worked at NASA, his ‘dream job,’ for more than 20 years. He’s been a lead space shuttle engineer, head of R&D for future shuttle technology, and the PR man who speaks at schools about future Mars missions. While it’s not hard to keep your job at a government agency like NASA, it *is* challenging to remain effective and relevant. He must carefully calibrate his words and actions on an ongoing basis.

Jay described his experience as follows:

“There’s an expression to ‘save your bullets,’ meaning you’ve got maybe six silver bullets in your career and must use them wisely and tactfully. You do not want to be labeled as a ‘complainer.’ Next thing you know, you are not invited to meetings anymore.

“There are many times where keeping your mouth shut is the best approach – mostly when the impact of the organization taking what you believe is the wrong course of action just doesn’t matter THAT much. The idea could be a boss’s pet project or come from someone close to the boss.

“But if the impact of the wrong course of action *does* cross the line of being important, *definitely* speak up. ‘Important’ at NASA means: 1) the safety of personnel; 2) mission success where failure will cost significant \$\$\$, or; 3) someone I like is at risk of losing credibility, etc. The Challenger and Columbia accidents were both examples of people NOT speaking up (or at least giving up after trying only one

avenue). If the boss says ‘no,’ you’d better have a *real* good reason to go to HIS boss, let alone your boss’s boss’s boss.

“I find it’s helpful to find a ‘first follower.’ Meet with someone before the meeting and ask him or her to back you up during a touchy discussion. Or during the meeting, be a good observer of who might be nodding in agreement and ask them directly what they think about what you said.”

Another key component of effective calibration is active listening. Speaking up is one thing, but if you’re not fully engaged with your audience as they speak – and responding in appropriate ways – then your words are diminished and you’ll likely fail in your mission to be effective and, ultimately, successful. Strive to remain flexible, and avoid mindlessly adhering to your own agenda without considering and respecting your audience.

How well did Guillermo calibrate his approach and response? Did he take into account his employees’ perceptions and motivations, which clearly were different from his own? He says that his primary goal is to make his people happy and productive, but does he stand a chance of achieving it if his employees don’t feel heard, valued, and respected – even if his reasons for making his decision are moral and valid?

SPEAK-UP STRATEGY #3: ENGAGE

You’ve done your preparation thoroughly... and then you thoughtfully calibrated your intended communication. Now, it’s time to show up and participate. Is your opinion worth being heard? Given your research, experience, and expertise... absolutely! You can’t win if you don’t play. What have you really got to lose by taking a chance and speaking up? Better still, what do you have to *gain*?

You certainly won’t be heard if you’re a wallflower and hide in the back of the room – or worse yet, if you play the doormat and let others take advantage of your good nature by offloading their

problems and responsibilities onto you. “I’m an introvert,” you protest, so you may have to work harder to assert your speak-up rights. But there is much to be gained by choosing to overcome your default personality traits, by shifting gears, and by striving to develop a more effective way of communicating.

Begin by practicing in areas where the intimidation factor is lower, and then build up to situations that are more complex. Ultimately, you’ll reach a point where you naturally suppress your feeling of intimidation and just speak up. Fear is only relevant if we give it power ... and in this case, the power isn’t real: it’s in our imagination.

Some people find effective ways to ‘trick’ themselves into being extroverted. A magazine publisher said she imagines putting on her ‘armor’ to go to battle. She says the armor transforms her from a shy, introverted person into a courageous, outspoken professional. The president of a media company who is shy by nature said he gets himself psyched before an important event by imagining – like an actor – that he’s playing the role of a successful, confident executive. By taking on your desired persona, you can take your ‘self’ out of the scene and become the person who will best serve the interest of your company and your career. “It’s not personal,” the publisher said. “It’s your responsibility to yourself and your company.”

If you need further suggestions, remember that everyone eats, sleeps, burps, and puts their pants on one leg at a time, just like you do. Remember, too, that everyone has challenges, including that dynamic speaker at the podium, the powerful CEO on the business news programs, and the most famous and successful people among us. Late in his career, the great Sir Laurence Olivier still got stage fright and often lost his lunch before performances. But he didn’t let it keep him from performing, and performing at the highest level. If you’ve done your homework and discern what’s appropriate in a given moment, then you’ll likely connect with your audience when you make the choice to speak up.

Play Fair

The corollary challenge to speaking up is the need to play fair and remain constructive while you make yourself heard. Just as you don't deserve to be intimidated, neither should you intimidate anyone else, and this can be a hard balance to find while you are developing your sea legs.

Doug Walker, President and CEO of REI Sports, speaks of the need to be “appropriately assertive while maintaining a high degree of respect for others.” As a soccer coach for a high school team, Doug instills these values in his team by teaching his players how to be aggressive and still play fair.

“To win a game as a result of an illegal jab is to win without pride, and this is not in alignment with the values that I’m teaching. In the context of the business world, I feel that it’s important that professionals employ a similar philosophy.

“A lack of assertiveness doesn’t allow people or the organization to grow in a healthy way. On the other hand, absence of kindness and consideration can turn the organization into a negative and demoralizing place – one in which few people would want to work.”

Rick faces a dilemma with Donald and his inappropriate proselytizing for Amway. He wants to be a nice guy. Yes, technically he’s not Donald’s boss and doesn’t want to ‘tattle’ on his co-worker. But doesn’t he have a responsibility to the company to do *something*? A line has been crossed. He must engage.

THE NICE COMPANY:

Speaking Up in the Corporate World

Every organization has a unique culture that typically reflects its core values. This culture shapes the behavior and attitudes of the people who work there. Success, therefore, depends heavily upon exhibiting behaviors and views that are consistent with the organization's values.

In most cases, niceness is one such value, as few employers seek to hire people who aren't good to others. Explicitly or implicitly, most companies make clear that employees must be 'nice' to co-workers and themselves, and to their suppliers, customers, and others in their circle. The presence of 'nice people' is considered a significant asset on the organization's hidden balance sheet.

Strangely, though, codifying such a value can be challenging, often because people believe that they already are 'nice' and that an official decree somehow suggests they aren't. Ron Shaich, President and CEO of Panera Bread, had a small battle with his legal and human resource departments when he recommended this kind of value statement. After a number of exchanges, Ron ultimately won out, and now, one of Panera Bread's four primary guiding principles is "No Jerks Allowed."

No one typically challenges the need to be nice as long as the organization is achieving its desired results. But what happens when being "overly nice" gets in the way of performance? People often engage in convoluted and passive behaviors if they become more concerned with politically correct "niceness" than getting the job done. The choice can have a negative impact on the business and become a liability on the hidden balance sheet.

Daniel LaMarre, President and COO of Cirque Du Soleil, advocates Nice as a significant factor in a company's culture. However, he also states that "Nice guys must make the business THE priority. This means that the business' interests must come first, and that hard work and diligence must be put forth to achieve success." For him, success and Nice are complementary and can propel an organization when properly intertwined.

To his point, the Nice Company must stress the importance to employees of speaking to one another – as well as to customers, business partners, etc. – in a respectful, yet direct, manner. Because Nice Guys can become excessively concerned about alienating other people or hurting their feelings, Nice Companies must engage in three key activities:

- *Introduce programs that promote the importance of “respectfully speaking up.”* Employees at all levels struggle with the balance between speaking up and showing respect for others. Focused workshops can help them learn to say what they need to say, when they need to say it, and without being perceived as a jerk.
- *Explain and continually reinforce the importance of direct communication and transparency for company and individual success.* Employees must understand that respectfully speaking up generates results. Stories of success (and failure) should be an integral part of internal training, change management programs, and performance reviews.
- *Celebrate employees when they speak up.* Don't just “talk the Nice talk” but “walk the Nice walk” as well. Publicly recognize employees who communicate Nicely, and where possible, illuminate the positive outcomes that resulted.

SUMMARY:

Go Forth and Speak

If a Nice Guy wants to succeed in business, the business world demands that he step up and share his thoughts, opinions, and beliefs in an articulate and effective way. It is fundamental to achieving success. And while it may not be a Nice Guy's natural inclination to behave this way, it is a skill that can be learned and well honed.

Proper *preparation* helps create opinions that are thoughtful, relevant, and informed. Accurate *calibration* of the audience and situation leads to the choice of the right time, place, and manner for the expression of those thoughts. And a commitment to *engage* will help those words come alive, launching from one's head into the world with the energy and impetus needed to reach the audience in a timely and effective way. It may take a little courage, but the payoff can be huge.

Don't be afraid to win in difficult situations," says Aaron Spencer, founder of Pizzeria Uno and self-confessed Nice Guy: only by overcoming those fears and finding the courage to put yourself 'out there' with the spoken or written word will you achieve the success you deserve.