

OPINION

## Want to be more persuasive? Become more likeable

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If you're going to be successful in your career, you need to be exceptional at selling. Not necessarily products and services, but, perhaps more importantly, your ideas, your points of view and yourself. Persuasive communicators are seen as self-assured, credible and trustworthy. They're likeable. And they get things done.

In the performing arts, someone who can sing, dance and act is referred to as a triple threat. While each of these skills separately is a talent, combined in one person, it creates an impressive ability. There is also a "triple threat" when it comes to persuasiveness – expertise (or perceived authority), honesty and likeability. When you are faced with someone who has one of these qualities, you're more disposed to agree to that person's request. If they have all three, your willingness to acquiesce and defer goes up exponentially.

Expertise is related to education, experience or organizational position. Honesty is linked to your past track record with the person – have you demonstrated truthfulness and integrity over time? But of the three, likeability is the most abstract and elusive. And also the one factor that can swing outcomes in your favour ... or not.

With that in mind, it is prudent to consider whether what you say and do makes you more likeable ... or less. Here are seven simple things that extraordinarily likeable people do, consistently and repeatedly.

### **THEY GIVE YOU THEIR FULL ATTENTION**

They ask questions. And then they listen, truly listen, when you speak. They demonstrate that they're listening. They put down their devices, they turn away from the computer screen and face you, and they commit fully to the conversation. What they're really doing is showing you that they respect you.

### **THEY ARE INTERESTED IN YOU BEYOND JUST THE MATTER AT HAND**

Likeable people want to discover more about you. They want to know who you are and what's important in your life, both professional and personal – your family, your hobbies, your career goals and your challenges. But that's not all: They remember conversations, and the next time they see you, they'll ask you for an update on something that you discussed previously.

### **THEY PRAISE GENEROUSLY**

Likeable people are all about giving credit where credit is due. When you help them, they'll thank you. When you do a good job, they'll acknowledge it, and they'll let others know. They'll never lay claim to your success. Instead they'll find ways to highlight your accomplishments to others.

### **THEY ARE AUTHENTIC**

Likeable people are comfortable with who they are. They embrace both their strengths and their weaknesses. No one likes a fake, and people gravitate toward those who are genuine because they know they are trustworthy.

### **THEY DON'T BLAME**

They understand that mistakes are a normal part of growing and improving. And they also know that blaming rarely solves the problem. If the responsibility for the situation is yours, they won't let you off the hook. But they will, instead, work with you to search for solutions so that everyone can move forward.

### **THEY DON'T PASS JUDGMENT**

Likeable people are open-minded, which means they're willing to see things through your

eyes. They also recognize there are alternate ways to accomplish the same goal. They are respectful of others' opinions, even if they don't agree with them. And they are willing to accept you, even if you think and act differently from them.

### **THEY HAVE A POSITIVE OUTLOOK**

Likeable people tend to be optimistic, believing that in every disappointment or failure lies a positive opportunity just waiting to be seized. Their brightness and buoyancy tends to bring others up, and often adds an equalizing influence to problems and complications.

While I am certainly not suggesting that you should spend all your waking hours focusing on being more "liked," it is worth keeping in mind that likeability can be the swing factor as to whether your ideas and point of view are heard and acted on.

Assuming that you are recognized for your expertise and integrity, if you are also likeable, you will find it easier to solicit support for your ideas and projects. You will be able to negotiate better outcomes. You will close important deals with clients and vendors more easily. You will spend less time and frustration working through disagreements with others. And the bottom line? You will become more effective.

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