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Be nice to the crew

Mean managers sometimes get pies in their faces

BY PATRICIA ELIOT TOBIAS

Special to the Los Angeles Times
Dave Barry once said, "A person who is nice to you, but rude to the waiter, is not a nice person." The business equivalent is: "A manager who is nice to clients but indifferent, unpleasant or unfair to the staff is not a good manager."



Which leads us to the very public troubles of Martha Stewart and Michael Eisner. Academics long ago learned that companies and business leaders fared better when they created positive, confirming corporate cultures.

A confirming culture is one in which employees feel valued. If you say, "I just turned in my project," a confirming response might be: "That's great! You worked hard."

People who receive confirming responses tend to have better morale, work harder and longer, don't jump

ship, take fewer sick days and are more productive.

But far too often, managers offer a "disconfirming" response: ignoring you, cutting you off in midsentence, changing the subject, being condescending, reacting ambiguously, etc. The subtext is that their time, their lives are more important than yours.

When moguls Stewart and Eisner required help, the people they needed were the

ones they had demeaned. The assistant who was treated rudely by Stewart was willing to testify against her. The employees and shareholders at Disney made it clear that Eisner's regime needed to change.

Managers and corporate leaders should be as accountable to their subordinates as they are to the annual report. Otherwise, no one will catch them when they stumble.

HOW TO BE A ... MASTER OF FENG SHUI

She'll get your life in order

JOB PROFILE

Name: Laura Benko
Age: 34
Position: Feng Shui Consultant

What do you do?

I go into people's homes and businesses and I help them create a healthy environment that supports their life goals.... I walk through their home from the front entrance on in, looking at it in many different levels. I'm looking at the aesthetics of design. I'm looking at the balance of the elements, position of furniture, the flow of energy. And I'm also looking into eliminating the harmful bio effects from electromagnetic fields.

Is a certificate required to practice?
Not necessarily.

How did you pick this field?

After being diagnosed with a life-threatening blood disease, I left my job to think about my life's purpose and treat my illness through

alternative means. The book, "Feng Shui and Health: The Anatomy of a Home," by Nancy SantoPietro, literally fell on me as I walked through the bookstore one day. After reading the book and making changes in my home, I felt this immediate and pro-



found difference. Shortly afterward, I found out the author was giving a lecture. I attended and was inspired by [her] work. I contacted her office and asked if I could work for her in exchange for going through her training program. After

working for her for over a year, I decided to start my own consulting firm.

What do you enjoy most about your job?

I have looked at hundreds of floor plans and it never ceases to amaze me how the challenges that the occupant faces are clearly indicated to me in the imbalances I see in their surroundings. I love being able to help people create a balanced, harmonious and healthy environment where they immediately feel a difference and are greatly affected by their newly adjusted space. The positive feedback from clients I have helped has been quite rewarding.

Any advice for people interested in your field?

If you feel this is your calling, I highly recommend training directly with the handful of masters in this field, diversify your mentors, study every day and follow your intuition. (Mina Hochberg)

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YOUR ONE STOP SOURCE FOR...TRAINING!

You don't have to fight to get those top jobs

BY KATHERINE BOYD

Special to amNewYork

Career Warfare: 10 Rules for Building a Successful Personal Brand and Fighting to Keep It

By David D'Alessandro
McGraw-Hill, 2004

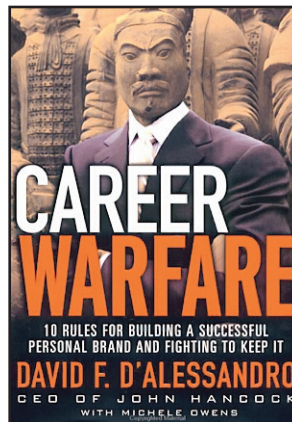
The Gist: A successful CEO gives solid advice on how to rise to the top.

Lowdown: Despite the provocative title, "Career Warfare" is not about taking a tire iron to your professional rivals like Tonya Harding in a business suit. Instead, D'Alessandro suggests you build and maintain your brand (or "character") through good manners, taking chances, keeping it real and making the boss happy.

Tone: Your wise, charming, witty uncle takes you under his wing for a few hours.

Highlights: D'Alessandro punctuates each idea with a real-life, often personal and always hilarious story.

Best anecdote: Just as he's about to receive a highly coveted promotion and raise, a young D'Alessandro pukes all over his boss's boss.



Drawbacks: Be prepared to spend a few sleepless nights agonizing that you've already inadvertently torpedoed your own brand.

Nugget of wisdom: Taking an old-fashioned number from mom, D'Alessandro sums up a major point about getting ahead: "do the kind, polite, discreet, dignified thing whenever you can." So much for career warfare.

Who should read it: A must-read for beginning and mid-career professionals in any field. Older professionals might want to read it for the chapter on dealing with the media.

NINE TO FIVE

Q. My pay stub has an alphabet soup of categories like FICA and FIT. What's it all about?

A. Two categories everybody will see on their pay stubs are FICA and OASDI, said Sam Kerch, a tax research analyst with Symmetry Software of Scottsdale, Ariz. FICA, which stands for the Federal Insurance Contributions Act, is the line for the 6.2% of your wages that goes to Social Security. The employer is required to make a matching contribution.

OASDI — which stands for Old Age, Survivors and Disability Insurance but is better known as Medicare — takes 1.45% of wages, and also gets an employer matching contribution.

The next most common categories cover taxes, Kerch said. These include FIT for federal income tax, sometimes listed simply as "federal" or "fed," and SIT for state income tax, which also can be rendered as "state" or "st." In some states, employees will also see a line for SDI, which stands for state disability insurance. (AP)