



The Power of Nice: How to Conquer the Business World With Kindness

Linda Kaplan Thaler , Robin Koval

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Linda Kaplan Thaler and Robin Koval have moved to the top of the advertising industry by following a simple but powerful philosophy: it pays to be nice. Where so many companies encourage a dog eat dog mentality, the Kaplan Thaler Group has succeeded through chocolate and flowers. In *The Power of Nice*, through their own experiences and the stories of other people and businesses, they demonstrate why, contrary to conventional wisdom, nice people finish first.

Turning the well-known adage of “Nice Guys Finish Last” on its ear, *The Power of Nice* shows that “nice” companies have lower employee turnover, lower recruitment costs, and higher productivity. Nice people live longer, are healthier, and make more money. In today’s interconnected world, companies and people with a reputation for cooperation and fair play forge the kind of relationships that lead to bigger and better opportunities, both in business and in life.

Kaplan Thaler and Koval illustrate the surprising power of nice with an array of real-life examples from the business arena as well as from their personal lives. Most important, they present a plan of action covering everything from creating a positive impression to sweetening the pot to turning enemies into allies. 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.

The Power of Nice: How to Conquer the Business World With Kindness Details

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Hazel says

Business books are really not my thing. I spend enough time working, I don't want to be thinking about business issues in my free time! The only reason I bothered with it is it was one of a handful of books I got for free at a conference and it was in my bag when I finished my last novel.

The concept of this book is to debunk the "good guys finish last" mentality. That rather than being detrimental, it pays to be nice. It lists some principles of being nice and illustrates why you should try to embody that principle with an anecdote or two.

I will say that I wasn't reading this book looking for life lessons. I've spent enough time in the business world to know that there are some people that should be forced to read a book like this. Honestly though, I found most of the principles outlined in this book to be common sense! I enjoyed the anecdotes but, for me, that's all they were. I'm lucky to work in an industry that's not exactly cut-throat but if I was in an industry like that and I was reading this book for reassurance that being nice wouldn't be a hindrance, I don't think I'd be convinced. I found it a bit simplistic, it deals with good or bad people but nothing in-between. I also find it difficult to believe that people are not familiar with the core concept of this book. They know taking the "nice" option is a possibility, they just don't see the benefit in doing that for them. I'm not sure this book can change that.

I'm not saying that this book is useless. I know it's a top seller. It's also well written and engaging and it's great to hear from successful businesswomen. Maybe it's just a case of not being in the correct target market. I already judge people on how well they treat their inferiors, not their peers. I think this book is targeted wrong to be honest. It would be an interesting read for young teenagers (dare I say particularly girls?) but I feel it's a bit light to really be considered as a business book.

Jessica says

Though the principle is simple, and perhaps even common sense, The Power of Nice illustrates the importance of being kind. Written by two business women in the Manhattan advertising world (the woman who wrote the Toys R Us theme song, and the firm that created the Afflack duck commercials) the emphasis is on the kind of business and capital their own firm is based on. These executives researched countless of examples, across industries and lifestyles, in order to find personable, relatable anecdotes of how a simple (and often random) act of kindness set off a chain of life-changing events. The book is a general response to the notion that business is cut-throat, that social Darwinism runs rampant in the linear path of success. The stories within the book are touching, and cover all phases and walks of life. The book, like the principles it's based on, is inclusive and allows anyone the power to practice kindness and empathy throughout the work-life balance.

Julie says

Before I review this book, I need to level with you and tell you that I, myself, am painfully nice. Or, maybe considerate is a better word. Anyhow, I didn't read this book to find out how to be nicer. I read this book to try and prove to myself that nice is *not* a detriment to success. For the most part, the authors were able to help me with this determination.

The authors, Robin Koval and Linda Kaplan Thaler, begin with "nice is the toughest four letter word you'll ever know." They start with the six principles of nice, and describe how niceness can work in our lives. The six principles are thus:

Positive impressions are like seeds: the results of the power of nice are rarely direct. You may not ever be able to trace your good fortune back to a specific encounter, but it lays the groundwork for a lot of opportunities down the road.

You never know: you should treat everyone you meet as if they were the most important person in the world. Because they are—to somebody. Maybe not to you today, but maybe in the future.

People change: This is a good one for my kids. I tell my boys, who knows...you might end up taking that snarky little know-it-all to the prom one day, so be nice. A little maturity does a lot for people, and snark is a close cousin to wit.

Nice must be automatic: this makes sense, nice only works if it's genuine.

Negative impressions are like germs: impressions are in the eye of the beholder, and one bad impression can affect everything you do.

You will know: even if other people do not see you treat someone poorly, you will know you did.

The six principles are largely common sense, but it's good to be reminded of our impact on others in daily encounters.

One part of this book I really liked was the recommendation to try and get to know other people by asking them about themselves. I also read about this strategy in Dale Carnegie's book, *How to Win Friends and Influence People* (1937). It makes perfect sense—if you're genuinely interested in people: who they are and what makes them tick—you should ask them to tell you about themselves.

Also, I like the way the book emphasizes community—we're taught to take all we can for ourselves in our individualist-centered, capitalist society. But, humans are wired to be community-oriented. After all, our brains are hard-wired for language (Eliot, 2000; Lakoff, 2010, Pinker, 2008; and others), which is our way of communicating with others in our group and maintaining our relationships. Life is not a zero-sum game—if the other person wins, that does not mean that I automatically lose. When you learn to shed the me vs. you mentality, you open up opportunities for everyone.

I enjoyed the chapter on saying "yes" because this is a very effective strategy I learned from a manager I once worked for. We were working on a software project, and the users kept adding features in meeting after meeting. I was exhausted from trying to manage their expectations, so I asked this manager for help working with the users. She said, I should just say "yes" to their requests. I was incredulous. But, then she explained that I should say "yes AND... , " which goes something like this, "Yes, I agree the feature would be a great addition to the software... AND, it will delay the project due date by two months, so we will likely be finishing in June instead of April." See how that works?

But, saying “yes” is not just a way to show people consequences, it also opens you up to opportunities you might have otherwise missed. The best example I can think of is when you are invited somewhere, and you’d rather stay home with a good book (yes, this is for the shy people of the world). But, you can say, “yes” and actually enjoy meeting others and having new experiences.

Even though the authors say that nice must be genuine, there is somewhat a karma or what-goes-around-comes-around feel to this book. I believe the authors are simply saying there are more rewards to being nice than just the comfort of knowing you are nice. But, for people who are just naturally considerate, there is simply no other way to do things. So, it’s good to know there might be some reward in it someday.

Overall, it was a quick read and an interesting book. The book contains many stories and anecdotes. I’ll admit, one of the reasons I continue to read books about business successes is for the anecdotes. I’m nosy, and I like reading these little sound-bites about other people’s lives. Plus, they are an excellent description of the book concepts in action. The book draws knowledge from well-known books on business leadership, so it’s well thought-out and researched compared to other books in the field.

Other References

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Hanki Nguyen says

M?t qu?n sách tuy?t v?i ?? gi?i qu?t bao nhi?u m?i quan h? và c?ng vi?c cho n?m m?i. #fantastic

Shonna Froebel says

The authors and the CEO and the president of Kaplan Thaler Group, one of the fastest-growing ad agencies in the US. They cite their own experiences as well as those of others to illustrate how being nice doesn’t mean being walked on, but means being respectful and thoughtful of others. They talk about saying “yes” and how it doesn’t always mean that you commit yourself to doing yet another thing, but that it can also mean helping those asking to find the right person that can help them. The examples given here are great at illustrating how the concept works, and the “nice-cubes” offered throughout give workable exercises to help you down the path of niceness.

The book encourages us to be more aware of how our behaviour affects others and to act in a way that we can respect in order to feel good about ourselves no matter what happens. I try to do this, but found ways to

think about being nice that I can work harder at.

A great, thought-provoking read with insight and humour.

Kurt Gielen says

This book is old wine in new bags. Nothing new here, all existing (and often good) advice, looked at from a "nice" angle.

The only reason to read this book is to learn that you can be successful without being an aggressive alpha-male person. But seriously, you don't need a book for that, here's my advice instead:

"You can be successful on your own terms, if you choose to. And if that includes being nice, fine. If not, also fine. Now stop reading books and go f@#kin' do it!"

As you can see, my terms include some swearing now and then. You should try it sometimes. Very refreshing.

Jeyashree Haridoss says

This book begins by saying that nice is one of the most powerful four-letter words out there. Linda Kaplan Thaler proves this statement several times over in this potent but quick read. She addresses her business experiences and how it always pays to be nice. This book provides more than enough evidence for all the skeptics who believe that being nice is not a smart idea in business. Business is seen as a dog eat dog world and people who are nice are seen as naive. However, this is not the case as the author recounts her experiences with rude bosses who she was able to change with her kindness. This book is written in a casual, almost conversational tone that allows the reader to understand the main points and strategies that the author shares. For example, she says that one of the best approaches to understanding someone is by asking them about themselves. This technique has proved to be true as individuals love sharing about themselves as long as the friend seems genuinely interested. There are several techniques scattered throughout this book that can help anyone in his or her personal and professional lives, regardless of whether that individual is in business or not.

Lauren says

The authors of this book, Linda Kaplan Thaler and Robin Koval, run an advertising company that has proven that nice guys don't finish last. Sharing the business practices they have adopted over the years, *The Power of Nice* is a book that insists that playing nice can get you to the top of the industry.

This was a super short book that shared some pretty basic principles:

If you're nice to everyone, eventually this niceness will pay off and great opportunities will become available to you.

Listen before speaking.

Empathy is the key to success.

Say yes to every opportunity.

With plenty of real-life examples of when kindness has paid off for people, little exercises at the end of each

chapter to help you become a better person, and a wealth of good advice, the book contains a lot of information for its 144 pages, but unfortunately, it felt like all the information it provided was rather common knowledge.

The Power of Nice felt more like an ad for the company - “Apply for a job with us! We get along well! Hire us! We’re nice to people!” The book also felt weirdly obsessed with Jay Leno. He wrote the intro, he was used as an example in almost every chapter of the book, and his name is in big black letters on the front.

A lot of advice in this book seemed to mirror that in Lean In, but Lean In is a far superior book. Altogether, I wouldn’t really recommend this to much of anyone, but if you choose to read it, try a free copy from the library first!

Daniel Wagner says

The Power of Nice is a great reminder of why and how being nice in every interaction will benefit you in the long run. The reinforce that being nice doesn’t mean being a push-over, just making sure the situation is handled in the best and nicest way possible. It’s a quick, easy read with great points.

Thu? ?? says

Recommended by my boss and i have no regret on spending time on it. Ordering a new one to keep it in my bookself <3

Pio says

C?m ?n v? ?ã nh?c t?i ph?i th?o mai nhi?u h?n.

Carolyn Baana says

Simple, easily applied advice. It does pay to be nice!

Anton says

This book simply, succinctly, yet compellingly, lays out the considerable force that generosity of spirit, authentic listening, and a deep and abiding will to serve brings to organizations. This is the unadorned and straight-talking truth about creating wholesome environments in which strong professional communities are best able to thrive. It presents an effective antidote for the convoluted and tortured logic of unbridled aggressiveness, fierce competitiveness, and negative critique that have come to be accepted by too many as the proper qualities of leadership. The book serves as a reminder to leaders in all sectors of the economy to keep in mind the first great task of leadership in challenging times: To avoid loss of heart and excite the will

to work together in coherent and robust teams dedicated to creating the future.

The capacity to inspire and motivate is a considerable differentiator when comparing good vs truly great and transformational leaders. The book is a deceptively easy and short read, perhaps easily overlooked as possibly "obvious" or "too soft" in a world of hard and difficult. That response, though, is most likely to come from the strident voices of cynics and what seems so obvious is, notwithstanding those sentiments, that the power of "nice" is a skill-set in critically short supply.

I find that the book really grows on you as a reminder of the true leader's prime directive: To cause the genius resident within an organization to fully express itself along with the shared passion, mutual support and collaboration that really makes things happen in high powered and sustainable ways. Enjoy it.

Sarah says

This book offers a lot of insight on how being nice will take you far in business, but it has some application for just life in general. We as an America society tend to equate nice with weak and this book is out to change that perception. Each chapter, but the last, has one or two "nice cubes" which give the reader practical ways to try and apply the principles discussed in the chapter. It's a great book with simple, and rather obvious, truths about being nice; but sometimes even the most obvious things only become clear when you hear someone else say them. Overall a hood book for anyone who wants to prove wrong the old adage of, "nice guys finish last."

Dana Robinson says

There are some good ideas and tips here, but unfortunately the book also succumbs to the simplistic analysis and cheap anecdotes that plague so many "pop business" books. Still worth a read, though, since most people could stand to be a little nicer and the book is generally useful, if not great. Also, for the love of God, please stop citing Malcolm Gladwell instead of the actual studies.
