

Why the Most Successful Leaders Don't Care About Being Liked

There's nothing wrong with wanting to be liked at work. According to Tim Sanders, author of *The Likeability Factor: How to Boost Your L-Factor and Achieve Your Life's Dreams* when your colleagues, direct reports and bosses like you, you have a better chance of getting promoted, being assigned special projects that interest you, having people go above and beyond for you, getting timely responses and feedback, and having the kind of social capital that you draw on to get what you want and need from others.

So, when does wanting to be liked become a problem?

When it comes at the expense of being respected. According to scientist Cameron Anderson of the Haas School of Business at the University of California, Berkeley, overall happiness in life is related to how much you are respected by those around you. Nevertheless, when we sacrifice what it takes to be respected for the quicker, and often easier, win of feeling liked, we lose out on the benefits that respect yields.

Like what? Like greater enjoyment and satisfaction with their jobs, more focus and prioritization, increased sense of meaning and significance, better health and well-being, and more feelings of trust and safety, and increased engagement.

Professionals who want (and often need) to feel liked tend to:

- Seek positive attention and approval
- Engage in gossip rather than giving direct feedback
- Try to please everyone
- Make promises they can't keep
- Keep strong opinions to themselves
- Flood people with credit, compliments and praise
- Play favorites (but pretend they don't)
- Use information as leverage, withholding or giving it away
- Give people tasks they enjoy rather than assignments that stretch and challenge them
- Focus more on how people feel (in general, and about them personally) than about achieving outcomes

Professionals who recognize the importance of being respected -- with or without being liked -- are more inclined to:

- Tell the truth, even if it's unpopular
- Explain their thinking behind the difficult decisions they make
- Acknowledge the elephant in the room, even if they can't fix it
- Say no when they need to
- Be open-minded and decisive
- Give credit when it's due to others and also take it when it's due themselves
- Tolerate feelings of disappointment, frustration, sadness and anger in themselves and others
- Hold people accountable for their results
- Be consistent and fair in setting rules and expectations
- Set and honor boundaries for themselves and others
- Deliver negative feedback directly and in a timely manner
- Ask for feedback regularly and then act on it
- Apologize when they make mistakes and then move on
- Model the behavior they expect from others

For professionals who want to grow in their roles and careers, being liked is good, but being respected is a requirement. As Margaret Thatcher once remarked, "If you just set out to be liked, you would be prepared to compromise on anything at any time, and you would achieve nothing."