

Title:
Impressions

Word Count:
508

Summary:
Columnist Nan Russell shares career insights learned over 20 years in the corporate world, including as a Vice President at QVC

Keywords:

Article Body:

Even now, months after it happened, it surprises me when I think about it. No phone call. No heads up. No discussion. As I opened the email from a business associate, checking my messages from an airport lounge, I expected a routine update. Instead, I read a message severing our relationship.

What startled me wasn't that this person decided it best to change a business situation. These things happen. It was how she informed me of her decision that brought the pain. You see, it's not just what you do that matters, it's how you do it.

I discovered more about her in that instant than I had in the months we worked together. I learned she took the easy way over the right way; lacked relationship courage; and retreated from difficult encounters. Her intention was to sever the current working relationship, but in the process she also severed my respect. You see, how you do what you do speaks volumes about who you are and what you value. It's a telling impression that leaves an imprint on those you touch.

Sure it's easier to use email to terminate relationships, deliver bad news or launch print-grenades. Just like it's easier to give advice when you don't have to live with the results; give orders you don't have to follow; and point out flaws you don't have to fix. And it's easier to be reactive instead of proactive, trade long-term sustained results for short-term gains and tell your boss what he wants to hear instead of what he needs to know.

All these things are easier. But easier isn't better, and easier won't get you winning at working results. Choosing the right way will. But that means finding

the courage to pick up the phone and have the unpleasant conversation, terminate a relationship that's not working or deal with conflict in honest ways. It means confronting issues, being hands-on as needed and letting your life's actions speak to who you are.

I've found in my twenty years in management, people who are winning at working don't take the easy way, even when the right way is difficult or fear producing. How they do their work is as important to them as what they do. And while we all slip at how we do our work at times, out of anger or frustration, people who are winning at working know when they've slipped and keep striving to do better.

You see, the impressions we make by how we go about our work, last. Bad impressions can destroy trust, eliminate respect and derail careers. But good impressions can create trust, earn respect and build your career. Sometimes you may not like the decision, but you still respect how someone executed it. That's a good impression. Want to be winning at working? Choose the right way to do what you need to do, not the easy way.

(c) 2005 Nan S. Russell. All rights reserved.