

## CEP Magazine – February 2024



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### Be respected before being liked

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by Calvin London

The title of this article may seem a strange topic for discussion. After all, doesn't everyone want to be liked *and* respected?

For managers—especially compliance managers—being respected must be the first priority ahead of being liked. Let's face it, compliance—like quality or human resource managers—starts behind the eight ball on the “likability charts” because their roles are associated with rules and regulations, training, “doing the right thing,” and all that fun stuff.

I was talking to a former employee and protégé a while ago, and she reminded me that this was one of the first life lessons I shared with her. While we all want to be liked and respected, it is my belief that compliance folks should particularly focus on being respected before being liked.

Respect for leadership is important when you want people to follow you. However, many leaders struggle because they also want employees to like them. There is nothing wrong with wanting people to like you. However, which is foremost?

Which is the bigger priority, and what if you have one without the other?

#### The value of being respected

Without respect, it can be challenging to accomplish what you want at work. At the outset, it is critical to understand that, for the most part, respect comes with experience. Age, level of experience, or how others perceive you in your role are all significant in whether you are respected.

Recruiters often ask managerial position interviewees whether they would rather be respected or liked, and what value they place on each. If you want to be a leader—and all compliance officers need to be leaders—respect is paramount, and being liked is a bonus. Being respected by your employees to the extent they enthusiastically carry out your directives only works if you give respect to them in return.

As a manager, I'd prefer to be respected. While it's nice to be liked—and can lead to a strong, effective team atmosphere—sometimes a manager must request or do unpopular things. Overvaluing being liked can make you reluctant to request that people do things outside their comfort zones. A respected manager can motivate people to work and complete tasks under any circumstances.

Several very positive benefits have been associated with respect.<sup>[1]</sup> Employees are more likely to:

- Be committed to your direction
- Follow your lead and stand up for what the team represents
- Go over and above for you
- Be less likely to push back in your direction
- Want others to experience what they experience
- Feel comfortable that they are on the right track and that they are in good hands

As compliance officers, we want employees to engage in compliance policies and processes for the company's benefit. We want employees to set a direction and standard for others to follow and do so positively—even when they may not totally understand why.

## Levels of respect

Many have no doubt heard parents tell their children many times to “respect your elders.” The logic behind this is that your elders (in the broadest sense) created the environment you live in. They have a lot of life experiences to share. The same is true for managers. We all would like our superiors to think we are a conscientious and respected manager because of their work experiences (good or bad), the abilities they have developed to deal with difficult situations, and the respect for others that they have learned. Being respected is a badge of honor!

The value of being respected is reflected in a survey conducted on nearly 20,000 employees.<sup>[2]</sup> Just over half (54%) said they did not receive respect from their leaders. These employees were found to be less creative and more likely to leave the company. About half also deliberately decreased their effort or lowered their quality of work. On the other hand, of those who feel respected, 56% had “better health and well-being”; 89% found more enjoyment and job satisfaction; and 92% had “greater focus and prioritization,” greater engagement with the company, and were more committed to staying, reflecting the comments made in the previous section.

Another survey identified that more than half of employees in the workforce left their jobs because they “did not feel valued by their organization” (54%) or managers (52%) or they “lacked a sense of belonging” (51%).<sup>[3]</sup> Additionally, 46% “cited the desire to work with people who trust and care for each other as another reason not to quit.” Employees want stronger relationships, a sense of connection, and to be seen and respected. Happy and satisfied professionals create better working environments for everyone, while dissatisfied workers are more likely to cause problems for the company. Employee satisfaction from being respected can help an organization's bottom line and promote a positive culture.

## How do you get respect?

Respect is earned through small actions over an extended time that demonstrates your sincerity, transparency, trust, and desire to get the job done the right way. Isn't that the motto for compliance—to get the job done in the right way?

People naturally respect those who do something that they admire or would be proud to emulate themselves. Employees can also look toward a manager as someone they might aspire to be, based on a foundation of respect that goes deeper than their positions and is more aligned with the person they are. In an article on team respect, Rajeev Nanda defines the value of respect in a very practical way: “If you take your name tag off, how many employees would still want to work for you?”<sup>[4]</sup>

Respect in the workplace can be earned in many ways, some of which are listed in Table 1. These translate into being productive, achieving results, delivering on promises, giving sincere feedback, and yielding respect. It's those praises and expressions that can mean the difference between being respected and being obeyed. There are three more I would add to Table 1 that have greater relevance to compliance officers and managers: lead by example, follow the rules, and be consistent.

Attribute	Rationale
Seek criticism and learn from it	You cannot be right all the time, but more than simply accepting this, listen to what others have to say about you.
Assume the best in others	Give employees a chance before you chastise them; you may be wrong in your assumption.
Apologize and admit mistakes when they occur	You will make mistakes; everyone does. Admitting your mistakes and asking what can be done to fix them is a quick way to gain respect.
Talk less and listen more	As Stephen Covey said, "Most people do not listen with the intent to understand; they listen with the intent to reply." <sup>[7]</sup>
Ask questions	Leaders gather information as a sign of interest. Everyone has a story; getting to know employees individually demonstrates your commitment to their welfare.
Look employees in the eyes	Focus on your employees so they know they are the focus of your attention.
Speak one-on-one to employees	Take time to allow employees the freedom to speak openly and directly to you.
Engage with employees	When you talk to someone, a gentle, brief touch on the shoulder or arm establishes a connection and shows respect.
Treat people without power with respect	Regardless of age, color, or position, everyone deserves respect.
Smile	Smiling reminds employees you are human.

As compliance champions, employees look toward the position to show them the right way to do things. You can't expect employees to speak up about issues if you do not speak up to your management about them or abide by a policy of equal opportunity if you yourself show favoritism to a particular section of employees. It may seem ridiculous to suggest that a compliance professional would not follow the rules; however, you should, for example, be diligent in completing training before scheduled dates if you expect employees to complete their training on time.

Above all else, compliance folks need to be consistent in their approach. The paradigm "all for one and one for all" needs to be your motto if you expect to gain the respect of fellow workers and management.

## Value of being liked

How does being liked differ from being respected, and why should it be the second priority?

Most employees would say being liked is more important. Everyone wants to be liked and accepted by teams, and people want to be around those who are friendly and kind. Most jobs include a social dynamic, and it can be devastating if it goes wrong. If employees do not like you, you have a limited career. Similarly, the same will occur if your superiors don't like you. The real question is, why do people not like you?

Not being liked by your superiors or employees can significantly effect on your success and career. Some points to consider are:

- Do you get involved in cliques that discriminate against certain sectors of the company or particular employees?
- Do you bad-mouth employees?
- Do you talk to people but never listen?
- Do you put your needs before those of others, especially other team members?
- Do you have a strong allegiance to peers or your team to the detriment of your relationship with your superior?

If you (honestly) answer "yes" to any of these questions, then maybe that's an area to work on. If allowed to continue, you may well be on the way to not being liked. Of particular note is the last point. You are employed for one reason: to help your boss do their job and make them look good. If, instead, you give them problems (people complaining, being disrespectful to them or their position), it is not going to end well.

## Key elements to being liked

It is amazing how most of us really like people asking us about ourselves. People love to talk about themselves and to tell their stories. One of the quickest ways to gain popularity is to listen to employees and work colleagues—and by listening, I mean *really* listening. Successful people listen and engage; in the process, they also learn a tremendous amount and grow as a person.

Some people seem to have a gift that when they walk into a room, they immediately capture everyone's attention and become the life of the party. For others, it takes time and effort, but it is a worthwhile journey because not being liked at work—as previously indicated—can be very career-limiting. Many articles have been published on

how to be liked; it is one of the cornerstones of modern society, and most people want to be liked by at least some people. Some attributes of being liked are shown in Table 2.

Attribute	Rationale
Be a good listener	Employees like it when you show an interest in them.
Treat employees with respect; be kind and courteous	Everybody deserves respect, and people respond well to it.
Use positive body language	Nod, keep eye contact, keep arms uncrossed, open stance, and a firm handshake.
Show gratitude when someone helps you	A thank you goes a long way to being liked.
Offer praise and credit early	Employees like to know that they have done a good job and respond well to recognition.
Learn employees' names	Identify with the people you work with.
Be empathetic	Emotionally intelligent workers constantly place themselves in others' situations.
Engage with employees	Ask questions to make employees feel comfortable, often resulting in them opening up and sharing more.
Give constructive criticism	Provide positive feedback, but do not be condescending.

Table 2: Attributes for being liked by employees and peers<sup>[8][9]</sup>

There is, however, a danger to trying too hard to be liked, especially for managers. Doing something for someone because you like them may be taken as favoritism by others and have a negative effect. Wanting to be liked to the point of being ineffective as a manager is also not good for your employees, you as an individual, and the company—particularly if it shields poor performance.

Being respected but not liked: Don't we want both?

This article started by suggesting that it was important for compliance folks to be respected before being liked. But don't we all strive for both?

The answer is yes, in most cases. I remember one particular individual who was a vice president in charge of quality and compliance who truly did not care whether he was liked or not. He ruled with an iron fist and had no compassion or empathy for anyone. Needless to say, he was not liked, but more to the point, he was not respected either.

It can be tough for a manager to decide which is more important. Being liked could translate into a stronger bond with employees. On the other hand, being respected could translate into a perception of a strong position of understanding and leadership. Both are important and comparing the attributes in Tables 1 and 2 (i.e., being respected versus liked) shows they are very similar.

Distilling these down leads to three main concepts:

1. **Develop professional relationships with both employees and superiors.** Balance being respected and liked by doing your job to the best of your ability and effectiveness.
2. **Establish boundaries and expectations.** Coworkers need to know what to expect from you and how you are likely to react in different situations.
3. **Treat others as you would want to be treated.** Engage with coworkers (albeit professionally) but treat them with respect and establish an interest in them as a person as well as a coworker.

## What's it got to do with compliance?

Compliance professionals need the respect of all those around them in their workplace: superiors, team members, and all other employees. Most people have an immediate reaction to withdraw from compliance folks—sad but true. The message you must give and the principles you try to put in place do not always sit well; however, they are more likely to succeed if you are respected before being liked.

Without respect, employees and coworkers may ignore your message, whether they like you or not. The elements of being respected—leading by example, establishing clear boundaries delivered with consistency, being supportive, and giving credit where credit is due—are also central elements of a strong culture. Commitment, loyalty, and dedication (what we all want from employees) are more likely when there is respect.

The bottom line is that you give as good as you get. Respect others, and they will respect you. Like others, and if they respect you, they will more than likely also like you. By promoting a culture of respect, employees will feel more engaged, motivated, empowered, and more likely to be compliant because it is the right and respectful thing to do.

## Takeaways

- Being respected by your employees to the extent they enthusiastically carry out your directives only works if you give respect to them in return.
- Employee satisfaction from being respected can help an organization's bottom line and promote a positive culture.
- For compliance managers, respect in the workplace is earned by leading by example, following the rules, and being consistent.
- Developing professional relationships, establishing boundaries and expectations, and treating others as you want to be treated are key to being liked and respected.

- To gain respect, compliance folks need to be consistent. “All for one and one for all” should be one of your mottos for success.

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- 2** Christine Porath, “Half of Employees Don’t Feel Respected by Their Bosses,” *Harvard Business Review*, November 19, 2014, <https://hbr.org/2014/11/half-of-employees-dont-feel-respected-by-their-bosses>.
- 3** Aron De Smet et al., “It’s not about the office, it’s about belonging,” McKinsey & Company, January 13, 2022, <https://www.mckinsey.com/capabilities/people-and-organizational-performance/our-insights/the-organization-blog/its-not-about-the-office-its-about-belonging>.
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- 9** Alyse Kalish, “12 Ways to Become a More Likable Person at Work—Starting Right Now,” The Muse, updated June 19, 2020, <https://www.themuse.com/advice/12-ways-to-become-a-more-likable-person-at-workstarting-right-now>.

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