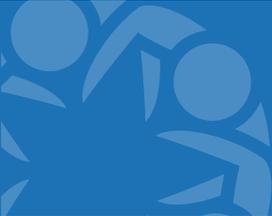




Glain Roberts-McCabe sat down with Roundtable Member, **Karen Hager**, Director of Science Engagement for the Ontario Science Centre, who shares her perspective on the importance of kindness in the workplace.



Mentoring **MATTERS**

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*Why do you think **kindness** is important in business today, and what can leaders do to encourage more of it?*

"The words I speak, the deeds I do, the world does hear and sees them too. Speak I the word, do I the deed, and in this world, I plant a seed."

~~Author unknown.

This quote was the lead part of a piece of homework for one of my friend's kids this holiday season. Realizing that a teacher somewhere in California was setting the stage for kindness with her small charges completely resonated with me, as I was focused on my own participation in a 12-day campaign focused on building kindness in the workplace (#12daysofbizRAK). How could just 12 days of random acts of kindness make me a better leader? Would anyone really notice? Am I not kind every day in some small way? And what does it really mean to be a 'kind leader'?

Sitting down to write this piece, following the campaign, gave me great pause for reflection. Maybe the way I deliver kindness is not perceived as I think it is. Weaving kindness into all aspects of my leadership has always been a part of what I do, but I need to make it more deliberate. And how would I answer the questions I've just asked myself?

How could just 12 days of random acts of kindness make me a better leader?

It's been said that to create any new habit, repetition is key. Focusing on the RAKs daily for 12 days did just that. I formed a new habit. Blatant kindness is the term I found myself using. At the start of each day, I planned what I would do that day that was obvious and not usual. At the end of the campaign, I still found

myself starting each day with blatant kindness. It's become a habit and something that I plan on continuing...so much so that soon it will be part of my daily routine that doesn't require great thought (kind of like checking my email). It's just what I do.

Would anyone really notice?

They did. Every single time. I had people posting photos of some of the stuff I was doing and, on about day six, was caught in the act by a colleague. They wanted to know WHY was I doing this and WHO put me up to it. It created an amazing opportunity to not only share the idea, but to lead by example. I noticed a shift in some of her actions within a week. Not only were my kind actions noticed, but they may have also been somewhat contagious. It seems that providing kindness, encourages kindness.

Am I not kind every day in some small way?

I thought so. After all, my parents instilled a strong set of values within me, but was I truly living my values every day? And how did they align with the organization's values? My time of reflection sent me to my 'gratitude journal' that I started a year ago, but was not successful at making a habit. There I reviewed entries that confirmed OF COURSE I'm a kind person. But most times I keep it to myself. By definition, being kind is "showing a sympathetic attitude toward others, and a willingness to do good or give pleasure. It implies a deep-seated characteristic shown either habitually or on occasion by considerate behaviour." I quickly realized that I need to demonstrate kindness in my leadership.

And, what does it really mean to be a 'kind leader'?

Being kind is not necessarily singing a song about how wonderful everything is – in fact, it's almost the opposite. It's getting everyone on the same page and letting them know what to expect, so that you're all marching in the same direction and end up with the desired result. As a leader in a large government organization, I need to make sure everyone understands what

our key goals and objectives are – and leading by example is key. Walk the Walk...Talk the Talk...we know the drill, but layering in a level of kindness in all we do paves the way in a much more effective manner. This may include lending a hand, offering an empathetic ear or providing some words of encouragement or gratitude. These are small things that can go a long way in building trust and engagement, and ultimately in helping you achieve key goals. When everyone knows that challenges or successes will be dealt with using the same kindness and thoughtfulness, it is much easier to manage and convey expectations in a way that builds alignment.

I continue to approach my leadership by going out of my way to lend a hand, to offer an empathetic ear or to say an encouraging word. Giving comes from a strength inside, along with a strength in backbone. It's not always easy, but it IS oh so rewarding.



Karen Hager is the Director, Science Engagement for the Ontario Science Centre. She is responsible for the development and delivery of all science engagement initiatives, public programs and community engagement work for the organization. Since arriving at the Ontario Science Centre, Karen has brought new ideas and innovative thinking to the Centre, and most recently has led the reinvention of the Centre's iconic experience into a new Energy Show.

Karen has played a significant leadership role in her field as Co-Chair for the Association of Science & Technology Centre's (ASTC) Conference Program Planning Committee. She is a Fellow at the Noyce Leadership Institute and is a life-long learner dedicated to 'pushing the envelope' past traditional thinking in all areas of leadership.



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Glain Roberts-McCabe is passionate about the art of leadership and supporting ambitious mid-career leaders. She created **The Roundtable** to provide emerging leaders with the navigational skills, tools and savvy needed to manage increases in scope, pressure and leadership complexity.