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It's Not Business

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A note from Sandy and Ira: One of our objectives in publishing this newsletter is to bring you the thoughts and opinions of others working in the field of negotiation. This month we introduce Marc Freeman.

It's Not Business, It's Personal

By
Marc Freeman

“Listen, I like you. This isn't personal, it's just business.” Has anyone ever given you that line? Did you believe it? Did you feel that it *was* in fact personal? Did your opinion of the person who gave you this line change for the worse, or did you expect it because you knew this person's reputation wasn't very good? If you answered yes to all of these questions, as I would, then you understand why “It's Not Business, It's Personal.”

It's time for business people to consider the human element in dealing with each other — the *personal* effect of our actions on others, in both our professional and personal relationships. We have to start taking full responsibility for ourselves, for all of our actions and their effects. Why? Because our behavior counts.

Many believe you can't use this approach in business because people will take advantage of you, but that's not true. It is possible—and *it is necessary*—to maintain personal integrity, character, and a good reputation while doing business. And when we develop these attributes in our personal lives, we are rewarded many times over.

You can't just tell someone that “it's not just business,” you have to demonstrate this through your actions. Here are some ways to show the people you're dealing with that you really mean it:

1. Remember that all of our interactions are with people.

Relationships of every kind and in every situation — even between large corporations or countries — are conducted person-to-person. When we recognize this fact (and pay attention to it), we're already on the right track:

2. Your reputation is based on how you treat others.

If reputation is important (and it should be), then your reputation is personal to you. When people want to make themselves feel ok about cheating you or just behaving improperly, that's when they give you the line, “*I like you; it's not personal, it's just business.*”

What they don't understand is that our actions reflect who we are, and what we are. Our actions create our reputation. It's *very* personal. Ironically, that's why so many people spin the truth—to *justify* their actions to those around them and to the world, but especially to themselves. Simply because our actions and behavior affect those we are dealing with, then by definition it's

personal. The statement, “*It’s not personal, it’s just business,*” is a mantra for bad behavior.

3. *Behave as if it is personal; react as if it is business.*

In every situation, a person can choose how to behave and how to react. Some people choose expediency over doing the right thing—cutting corners to save time and money, or not considering other people’s feelings. If you want to maintain a good reputation, then you have to pay attention to your behavior. Therefore, behave as if it is personal to you, because your reputation is at stake.

On the other hand, you cannot take *everything* personally. This may seem to be a contradiction, but it really isn’t. This stance enables you to be more objective, while at the same time reminding you to behave with respect and integrity. Understand that the way someone else behaves or treats you is a reflection on them, but not necessarily a reflection on you. If you continually take everything person-ally, then you will constantly be disappointed and get bogged down in someone else’s bad behavior—in details that are unimportant to you and to the situation you are dealing with. It’s best to react as if it is business. Never react impulsively.

4. *Hit the refresh button.*

Prior to reacting, we need to step back and “Hit the refresh button.” Reconsider what’s been said; review your objectives and those of the other party. Listening is a rare skill; once learned, the people you’re dealing with will always recognize

your respect for them. Listening also gives you a chance to be silent and *not react*. Take your time.

5. *Be aware of how you are treating others.*

Be nice—not insipid or insincere, but just straightforward, without being harsh, mean, or aloof. Behave the way you want to be treated.

6. *Use your sense of humor.*

This may be difficult for some, especially in the heat of action, but it can turn the tide in your favor under the most adverse circumstances. Humor will help you break the ice. Be careful though, because inappropriate humor can backfire.

Here is an example that happens daily:
You’re renting property you no longer can afford, but the lease runs another year. How can you get the landlords to either reduce the rent, or let you out of the lease and refund your deposit?

Your approach to the landlords is critical. Spin the truth and try to make it their fault, and you’re not going to get very far. But tell them the truth, and they have more reason to help you out. Telling the truth keeps your integrity and reputation intact, and shows respect to the landlords. You’re not acting entitled; you’re just asking for help. Now they must decide how to behave, how to react to your request. In most situations like this, landlords try to help out their tenants if they can.

If you consider your reputation to be important, then the way you treat people is fundamental. It follows that your behavior is

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critical in both your business and personal life. Don't underestimate the far-reaching benefits of treating people with respect. Don't underestimate the importance of treating yourself with respect. And certainly don't underestimate the benefits of what good behavior will bring to you through *being treated with respect*.

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*Marc Freeman, author of the book **Renegotiating with Integrity: It's Not Business, It's Personal**, has worked with companies all over the world, helping them to renegotiate hundreds of millions of dollars in contracts. A recognized expert in his field, Marc has developed a unique, practical approach to renegotiating based on the simple principles of respect, honesty, creativity and clear communications. For more information, please contact Marc at marc@marcfreeman.com or at 641-472-2727.*

Appearances

Ira will be speaking at the 5th annual Global Clinical Outsourcing Summit on December 7th. He will be sharing a panel with Barry Sagotsky.

For additional information contact <http://www.iibig.com/outsourcing>.

Publications

Ira's article on Boundary roles, *The Regulatory Professional as Boundary Spanner*, will be published in the November issue of the Regulatory Affairs Journal.

To obtain all of the earlier newsletters and our newest products, go to our website at www.asherman.com