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Respect key to office manners

By Jill Haney • May 17, 2009

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A host of readers have e-mailed me about behavior from co-workers that they would like addressed. The office can be become a highly charged and stressful place, especially in light of the bad economy, and it's apparent that the more stressed you are, the more annoying this behavior becomes.

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My hope is that by raising awareness on the types of things that can really bother others, it can help defuse what can become a flashpoint among co-workers.

For many of you who share work stations or cubicles, behavior, in particular sounds, really have an impact on your attitude toward work.

Digital watches that are set to beep every hour can be highly annoying. Imagine sharing space with two or three people whose watches beep every hour on the hour, beep when it's time for lunch, and beep when the day is over. Ugh! We're all adults, do we need to be reminded every hour what time it is? Out of respect to your cubicle mates, please silence your watches.

I have never held a job where I felt it was appropriate to sleep while at work, but apparently there are many out there who feel it is their right to nap every day. I don't think it is the nap that is so disturbing, unless you take into consideration that they aren't working, but the snoring that sets people off. Nice job if you can get it! My recommendation to the people who work with those who nap would be to go over to their desk and nudge them once they start snoring. That ought to be a wake-up call ... pardon the pun.

One reader works in an office where employees who eat at their desk leave the empty food containers in the work area only to find the refuse overrun with ants, flies, and other insects that make nests so that when the eggs hatch there is a swarm of insects.

Speaking of food, readers really find it annoying when co-workers steal the lunch or snack that others have stored in the company fridge. I would hope that putting your name on your lunch would alleviate the issue. Keep me

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posted.

I think the goal of many professionals is to work smarter, not necessarily harder or longer, especially for commission-based employees. Those who work on commission find it irritating when, on Friday afternoon, salaried employees are already in "weekend" mindsets and want to start the social hour, while the commissioned corps is still humping to get business done. Keep in mind that just because someone is in their office doesn't mean that they are always available. It is always polite to ask someone if they have a moment before you begin to socialize.

Remember that a little bit of courtesy goes a long way in making the office a pleasant place to be. The old saying "familiarity breeds contempt" seem to be apropos with these annoying office behaviors. Be aware that what you find normal or comfortable may not be perceived as such by others. We all have pet peeves. Make sure to take stock of what you do that may be someone else's pet peeve. Feel free to contact me with your stories and I will be happy to address any issues.

Jill Haney's Cincinnati-based business, JH Image Consulting, conducts individual certified image consultant with the Association of Image Consultants International. Reach her at 513-505-2732, jill@jhimage.net, or www.jhimage.net.

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