By Prema Jayabalan
editor@leaderonomics.com

HAVE you ever been perceived as rude by others, even in reality you are not? Sometimes, we tend to come across as being rude without actually intending to be so.

Some may experience this in their work life. When in meetings, situations can get heated due to crises, and the manner a person voices his or her opinions may come across as offensive to some. So how do you ensure that people don’t mistake you for being rude? Well, here are five tips you can follow:

MOVE UP AND NOT DOWN
When in a discussion and another person is sharing his or her thoughts, being disdainful by saying things like, “Oh yeah, you always say that” or “That’s what you think” may label you as a person who is annoying and outright rude. This type of condescending tone could imply that you are putting the other person down and it can ruin your relationships with others.

On the contrary, you can encourage the person by saying things like, “That is a very interesting thought” or “I like the way you think,” and then follow up with your thoughts by saying, “What do you think if we also did it this way?”

By speaking in this manner, it shows that you respect the person’s effort to come up with ideas and slowly ease into adding on to the missing parts without coming across as a snob.

NEVER INTERRUPT
If you are in a meeting and your colleague is in the midst of presenting his or her ideas, do not ever interrupt to express your ideas, however relevant it may be. Instead, let the person finish talking and if you really need to voice your thoughts by saying, “May I please add something on here?”

If the person gives you the permission to speak, then you can thank that person and put forward your thoughts without coming across as rude.

I AM SORRY
To avoid being perceived as rude, it’s important to master the art of apologising even though at times it may not be completely your fault.

For example, in an attempt to send out a message to a group of people at work, you had slightly mismanaged it and this caused a slight confusion. The first thing to do is to say “sorry.” The moment you apologise, you are seen as someone who is accountable and takes responsibility for his or her actions.

People see you as a genuine person who does work well but happened to make one slight mistake. When you refuse to apologise, then you are labelled as a rude and arrogant person.

DON’T BE LATE
Being rude is not always about the way we communicate verbally. Sometimes, it involves our actions too. One such action is arriving late for meetings. Always be punctual. If you have given a designated time or the person you are meeting has done so, then be there at that specific time, as this shows that you respect and value that person’s time.

In the event that you are going to be late due to unavoidable circumstances, inform the person about the delay. Once there, the first thing to do is to apologise for the inconvenience caused even though you have alerted the person earlier that you will be late. This depicts you as a courteous and respectful person.

NEVER IGNORE
There is another crucial thing you need to learn to do to avoid being perceived as rude, i.e. not to ignore others.

For example, a new colleague who is meeting up with you is a little over-enthusiastic and wants to share a lot of his or her work with you. Now, it’s understandable that at times, this can slightly bore you, especially when you are loaded with work. Nonetheless, never ignore the person by fiddling with your mobile phone or checking your e-mails when he or she is talking. This is downright rude and it’s demeaning for the person who is interacting with you.

The least you could do is to politely explain to the person that you have another appointment coming up or an urgent task that needs to be completed, hence you would need to take their leave for now. Schedule another time to meet up with this person; this will make the person feel appreciated.

IN A NUTSHELL
These five tips may seem insignificant but they play a huge role in displaying the type of person you are. Practising these methods elevates you to a likeable, genuine person, and ignoring them could portray you to be absolutely rude. So take your pick!

By Dan Rockwell
editor@leaderonomics.com

If you have a lot to say, plan to listen much more than talk. If you have a lot to say, plan to listen a lot. If you don’t have time to listen, you don’t have time to lead.

Listen for what isn’t said: “The most important thing in communication is to hear, what isn’t being said.” — Peter Drucker

Four listening tips:
1. Fall in love with the voices on your team, not your own.
2. Relax when others are talking.
3. Spend as much effort planning your listening as you spend on your talking.
4. Plan to listen much more than talk.

Food for thought:
How might leaders become better listeners?

FIVE THINGS THAT GO UP WHEN LEADERS LISTEN

Five things that go up when leaders listen:
1. Engagement. Verbosity encourages disengagement. The next time you complain about disengagement, examine your listening.
2. Energy. Think of a time when a leader really listened to you. Last you were energised. Invite people to talk if you want to increase their energy.
3. Boldness. People who feel they matter act with boldness. You make people feel they matter by listening to them.
5. Commitment. People who don’t feel heard resist. People who don’t agree, but feel listened to, will commit.

The more you need to do, the more you need to listen.

Four listening tips:
1. Fall in love with the voices on your team, not your own.
2. Relax when others are talking.
3. Spend as much effort planning your listening as you spend on your talking.
4. Plan to listen much more than talk.

Food for thought:
How might leaders become better listeners?

PREMA JAYABALAN believes that good interaction starts with respecting each and every one you speak with. She is happy to be a part of the Leaderonomics Digital Learning team that enhances the personal and professional development of all individuals through their creative and interesting online courses. To learn more about this, e-mail learn@leaderonomics.com. To engage with Leaderonomics on how to develop high-impact communication skills within your organisation, e-mail us at training@leaderonomics.com.

Dan Rockwell is a coach, speaker and is freakishly interested in leadership. He is the author of a world-renowned, socially shared leadership blog, Leadership Freak.