

# iX Leadership: A Few Quick Tips to Thwart Those Gnarly Culture Killers

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“Hello, McFly?!” This quote recited time-and-again by Biff Tannen in the Back to the Future movies floats around our house pretty frequently. And, whenever I’m asked what the magic recipe is for great customer experience, the same thought pops into my head. “Hello, McFly! Don’t you know the answer?!” Of course, people don’t know. As business professionals, we’ve been scratching our heads, whiteboarding, brainstorming and conversing about the age-old question, “How do we provide a healthy, inviting customer experience where satisfaction is king?”

I contemplated this question for many years and studied the behaviors of customers, agents and the like. I thought about my experiences where I called for assistance. “Was I happy with the interaction?” “Did the person on the other end of the line really irk me?” If the interaction was good I thought about how and why that was and did the same for a crummy experience. What did I discover? Turns out, as we’ve known for many years, if a person is nice to you, you have a more pleasant experience and are nice back! While this isn’t rocket science, it’s darn hard for us to grasp as humans. We’re all running to happy hours, dinners, meetings, soccer games, yoga and spinning class. We’re worried about getting our oil changed, adding money to our bus pass, calling to check on parents and siblings and, and, and. Wrapped up in our own lives we forget to account for other’s troubles when we’re processing a conversation.

So, Meg, where are my tips – pretty busy here? How can I use

this in my business, department, own career? Here it is folks, the tips and tools we'll talk about today are The Mad Hatter Principle and non-complimentary behavior. Both of these concepts are found in our (Dr. Rachel MK Headley and myself) new book iX Leadership: Create High Five Cultures and Guide Transformation.

Those mad hatters in the 19<sup>th</sup> century were marked as lunatics with unmanageable attitudes. Why? Mercuric acid used in the curing process for the felts was ingested by these poor gentlemen and made their relationships with friends and family nearly impossible. Of course, no one knew and just thought these cantankerous jerks were nefarious for...fun? What the Mad Hatter Principle teaches us is to start each conversation by assuming that every person involved has good intent. Even if their behavior doesn't show us that, we start there. Setting goals helps each person on the team remember why we're all here so that when a bad day shows up we can bring each other back in and refocus on business. This is the first, quickest and best step to working towards a healthy internal experience is to shake off those assumptions that others have ulterior motives, bad attitudes or wicked intent.

In a podcast called Invisibilia on NPR the hosts take an episode to talk about non-complimentary behavior. The idea is that meeting anger, frustration or general negative emotions with the opposite (positive) emotions makes it impossible for the angry party to maintain, well, anger. Basically, "kill 'em with kindness" as my grandmother O'Sullivan always said. The untrained reptilian brain cannot maintain a certain set of emotions when met with an opposite set of emotions. So when Jim comes in to a meeting, exasperated by his lack of sleep due to a newborn, smile at him and say, "Hey Jim! How you doin'?" He may at first respond with a snarl or some mumbling about crying babies and bottles needing to be warm but hang in there! Show you understand his plight by sharing a story or asking more questions. Keep smiling, be genuine. Use that Mad

Hatter Principle and remember that Jim isn't mad at you, he's just having a hard day. Be there for him. That's what teams are all about after all.

What are we really taking about then? Be NICE! Be SUPPORTIVE! This, of course, doesn't mean shirk all responsibility, throw accountability out the window and make sure people are all roses and sunshine all the time – we'll cover all that in another edition of **Meg's real business leadership tips**. What it does mean is that, as business professionals, we have an opportunity to create an environment for our work [teams](#) that encourages them to be good to customers (internal and external). Supporting each other is the quickest way to combat the invasion of ego and attitude. Using the Mad Hatter Principle and non-complimentary behavior gives us the jump on those gnarly culture-killers. Don't let culture-killers suck the productivity out of your teams! Teach your teams to team, high five and kick ass. Invest in your culture, it'll be the most profitable decision you ever made.

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**About the Author:** *Meg Manke, Senior Partner at Rose Group Int'l, is a culture and leadership expert with years of experience leading companies large and small through transition. Drawing from her background in organizational psychology and mastery of leadership concepts, her ability to recognize opportunity in weakness and present a strategic solution is unprecedented in today's business world. Partnering with [Dr. Rachel MK Headley](#) at Rose Group Int'l, they developed their proprietary [iX leadership framework](#) which allows business leaders to solve problems within their teams, address generational issues, manage big changes, and accomplish their most ambitious goals. For more information about Meg's book, *iX Leadership: Create High-Five**

*Cultures and Guide Transformation, [click here](#). For more information about Rose Group Int'l, please visit <https://rosegroupintl.com/>. Connect with Meg [@meg\\_manke](#) on Twitter and on [LinkedIn](#).*