



The
**RESPECTFUL
LEADER**

Seven Ways to Influence Without Intimidation

A BUSINESS FABLE

GREGG WARD

with **WALTER G. MEYER**

WILEY



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Additional Praise for *The Respectful Leader. . .*

"The Respectful Leader teaches you more, in 90 minutes, about respectful, conscious leadership and its powerful impact on business success than you might ever learn in a lifetime."

Kevin Rafferty,
The Conscious Leaders Coach, author, *Wake Up,*
Get Real, Be Happy—Becoming Your Authentic Self

"Few business leaders appreciate that respect is the foundation of any high-performing organization. With respectful leadership, all of the other leadership tools and techniques are effective; without it, they all break down. Gregg Ward is the guru of respect and he nails it in this powerful, engaging, and useful fable."

John N. Kohut,
Chief Operating Officer, Orison

"Ward skillfully summarizes the importance of strong interpersonal relations—so often underappreciated—in the workplace. His story makes it crystal clear how taking the time to improve your skills at respect affects not only the bottom line, but also your staff's loyalty, commitment, and enthusiasm."

Eric Cornwell, M.D.,
Physician, HR, Satisfaction and Diversity,
The Kaiser Permanente Medical Group

"A powerful and impactful read! Best business fable I've read since *Death by Meeting*. With practical and easily remembered rules of the respectful road, Gregg Ward provides all the information you need to create an environment of respect, trust, teamwork, and high performance, both in your business and for your family."

Joseph C. Adan,
Public Sector Department Head,
Captain, U.S. Navy (Ret.)

“The Respectful Leader is a refreshing antidote to what’s wrong in today’s rude, rushed, and me-first workplace, and a practical guide for those who want to create a civil and courteous culture.”

Christopher Witt,
author, *Real Leaders Don’t Do PowerPoint*

*“This intriguing story clearly illuminates one of the biggest challenges in today’s workplace—the overwhelming lack of respect by people at all levels, and particularly by leaders. But it doesn’t have to be this way! Being respectful is simple—if you reach back and remember the lessons your parents taught you about how to treat other people, then you’re halfway there. Ward’s book provides a useful framework and easy-to-follow guidelines that will take you the rest of the way. *The Respectful Leader* will allow you to change your culture, change your company, and even change yourself.”*

Milton N. Green, Jr.,
Director of People & Culture, Renovate America

“The Respectful Leader offers great, practical insights and techniques on how to build a respectful—and successful—organization.”

Christopher Aaron,
Director, Comcast Corporation

*“Ward is right on target with *The Respectful Leader*. Finally, an easy-to-read and incredibly useful book on the real power of respect and respectful leadership.”*

Phil Dixon,
**Founder and CEO, Academy of
Brain-Based Leadership**

“The Respectful Leader is a clever and practical book; a must-read for anyone who is a leader as well as anyone who trains or coaches leaders. The examples that Ward uses for building respect within your company will hit home for anyone who reads this compelling book.”

Sally Daniel,
**President and CEO, The Sally Daniel
Training Group, Inc.**

"Respectful leadership is a business imperative for building a trust-based, collaborative, and effective organization. This book is extremely useful for leaders who want to set an overall tone of respect, as well as to mentor and coach their staff. A great read."

Robert J. Makar,
Partner (ret.), Booz Allen Hamilton

"Extraordinarily valuable lessons in this book! They sure don't teach you this stuff in business school. *The Respectful Leader* is compelling and practical, while also being a quick, engaging, and easy read."

Mark Schall,
Business and Executive Coach

"This story provides a compelling, 'real-world' example of the business challenges that can result from having little or no respect in your workplace. Fortunately, Ward provides practical, easy-to-follow advice on how to turn things around. A must-read for every leader!

Catherine Mattice,
author, *BACK OFF! Your Kick-Ass Guide*
to Ending Bullying at Work

"The greatest leaders make respectful leadership look easy—a skill often mastered through experience. This book offers valuable leadership lessons in an easy-to-read parable and provides simple methods for influencing others without intimidation. Grimace as the new CEO makes all of the classic leadership mistakes you'll never want to go through and cheer when he transforms into the respectful leader."

Matthew Rivaldi,
Business Faculty, San Diego State University

*Dedicated to my father, Gene Ward—sportswriter,
outdoorsman, poet—who treated everyone with respect.*

Introduction

As my colleagues and I travel around the world giving speeches and leading seminars, we keep hearing the same lament from employees, managers, even leadership. Just about everyone feels that there's more and more disrespect going on in our workplaces than ever before. We're hearing that common courtesy isn't common practice; that employees feel bullied, ignored, and undervalued; and that senior management considers them disposable when times get tough or priorities change. Numerous employee surveys and organizational culture studies support these perceptions. Maybe you're experiencing this, too?

So why is this? Why are people feeling so disrespected?

Well, it could be that rapid globalization is mushing together diverse groups of people faster and more intensely, and that what is considered acceptable and tolerable behavior in one culture may be considered disrespectful and intolerable in another.

It could also be that the ever-increasing frenzy and complexity of business, the shift to the freelance and "gig" economy, and continuous economic uncertainty cause people to shove courtesy aside because they're afraid of losing time, opportunities, and resources. There's no question that operating from a mindset of scarcity can quickly drive a normally respectful person to be extraordinarily rude.

Ambition, competitiveness, and managers with so-called “Type A” personalities—who are determined to win at any cost—can also contribute to sustaining disrespectful work cultures where decency and caring are considered synonymous with weakness and ineffectuality. Additionally, “competitive busy-ness,” the tendency to take on overwhelming amounts of work in order to increase a sense of self-importance and the boss’s perception of one’s value, can also be a handy excuse for rudeness.

Still another factor contributing to all of this disrespect may be our ever-expanding love affair with technology—smart phones, tablets, laptops, and apps for every possible need or want—leading us to skip traditional human interaction in favor of a text, chat, or email. How many times have we received emotionally loaded emails from someone down the hall, or on another floor, about an issue that could easily have been resolved with a quick phone call or face-to-face? How many meetings have we been in with people who are supposed to be paying attention and contributing, but they’re constantly being distracted by their smart phones? Everyone agrees that these are disrespectful behaviors, and yet most of us say nothing, especially if our bosses are the culprits.

That brings us to this book. After more than two decades of studying and learning about respect and disrespect while consulting and leading training programs for some of the world’s most prestigious companies, non-profits, and government agencies, my colleagues and I—not to mention many top consultants and organization development experts—have become convinced that creating and maintaining a work culture of respect and Respectful Leadership are absolute business imperatives.

Respectful Leadership means treating everyone—regardless of rank, status, or position—with the same genuine regard and consideration that you would like them to give you. It means being the first to offer respect to others, even strangers, and behaving in a respect-worthy way. It means getting your “emotional shift” (more on this later) together when things go wrong. It means

acknowledging and honoring others; consistently looking for qualities in others to respect; nipping disrespect in the bud, respectfully; and fully apologizing for disrespectful behavior.

Although Respectful Leadership as an idea may seem like a warm and fuzzy, the measureable results are hard to dismiss: they include increased loyalty, respect, trust, collaboration, and productivity; fewer complaints, conflicts, and lawsuits; and an energizing sense throughout the entire organization that each one of us can be wholly successful in whatever we're doing while still behaving, and being treated, like decent human beings. Bottom line: the human and business case for Respectful Leadership is undeniable and irrefutable.

But for many years we struggled with a basic question: How do we make that business case for Respectful Leadership in a way that everyone can understand and want to buy into?

The answer is to tell a short, easy-to-read story about people and situations that are familiar to most, if not all of us. It's very likely you'll know and work with people who are similar to the people in our fable. And it's likely that their behaviors, and the challenges they're facing, are also very familiar to you. It's that familiarity—that sense of “Yup, that's kind of how we are” feeling—that will allow you to make the human and business case for Respectful Leadership for yourself.

It's our sincere hope that you will find this story, and the concepts, tools, and techniques we outline within it, to be truly useful in helping you and your organization understand how powerful, effective, and rewarding Respectful Leadership can be.

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PART

I

The Fable

1

Settling In

It was 7:55 a.m. on a beautiful Southern California Monday, and Des Hogan, the brand-new chief executive officer of COR-Med Corporation, leaned back in his new executive chair, put his hands behind his head, his feet up on his desk, and mentally patted himself on the back.

Well, buddy, he thought, you've really made it: CEO of a \$35M company before you turn 40; a fabulous, loving wife; two wonderful kids—well, one, anyway—a son, and also one moody teenage daughter; a new company-leased “Beemer” parked just outside; a washboard stomach; and a small, but growing slice of the medical device market in the United States and overseas. Life couldn't be much sweeter.

A text from his wife Laura came in: “Good luck! So proud of you! Love, ME.” After texting “Thank You!!” he made a mental note: *give wonderful gift to wonderful wife because she's always encouraging me to “go for it.”* You wouldn't be here, he reminded himself, without her.

And “luck”? Yeah, Des thought, luck may have played a part in landing this gig. But mostly, he felt that he'd been put in this position on his merits, because of who he was and what he'd done. He didn't necessarily think he needed a lot of luck to be successful from here on; he just needed determination.

Sure, he'd only been tapped for this job ten days ago. And yes, the previous CEO and CFO had been terminated under mysterious circumstances, leaving the company in much worse shape than they'd found it in. In fact, he really didn't know much at all about the inner workings of the place other than the financials were out of whack, and he wasn't sure why.

But those were details, he thought, nothing he couldn't handle. Besides, he was about to have his first meeting with his leadership team to start going full speed on the turnaround. I'll figure this thing out, he assured himself, I can do this!

Then his desk phone rang. Des deliberately didn't answer it, assuming his assistant Rita would pick up. But it kept on ringing. Perplexed, he called out of his office door into the reception area: "Rita, can you pick up? Rita?" No answer. After a moment of wondering whether he was going to have issues with his executive assistant, he shrugged his shoulders and picked up the handset: "Des Hogan here."

"Des? What the hell are you doing answering your own phone?" It was Des's boss, Chuck Morton, the president and CEO of Arellus International, COR-Med's parent company. Arellus was a massive global operation valued at \$3.5 billion, with over 40,000 employees worldwide. Chuck had picked Des for this job, taking a big risk by pulling him out of a COO slot at another Arellus subsidiary. He'd specifically warned Des that he would keep a close eye on him.

"Oh, hey, Chuck. I was just wondering that myself." Des tried to sound unconcerned: "Looks like my assistant's gone missing for a moment. No problem."

"Well, don't go letting your staff take advantage of you, got it? Anyway, I wanted to be the very first person to call you on your very first day in the CEO's chair. How's it going so far?"

Des thought for a second, wondering what Chuck would want to hear. Realizing that he needed to impress his boss, even though

he hadn't even touched his feet to the ground, he lied: "Great! I'm already kicking ass and taking names."

"Outstanding," replied Chuck, expansively. "That's the ticket."

Des inwardly sighed with relief. Chuck had made it crystal clear that COR-Med was in trouble, in need of a serious intervention. This was partly the result of the incompetence of the previous CEO. Chuck had installed right after Arellus bought out COR-Med's founders two years ago. According to Chuck, Des's predecessor wasn't tough enough on the employees, didn't cut expenses deeply enough, or ramp up development or production fast enough and, in general, was missing a spine.

Chuck continued without pausing for breath: "I don't think I need to tell you again how important it is that you turn that place around as fast as you can."

"No, sir, you don't. I'm on it." Des suddenly noticed that his office seemed very warm and that he'd starting sweating.

"Good to hear. Not to put too fine a point on it, but I will anyway. I'm giving you six months, maybe eight, to show real progress, especially on raising revenues and cutting costs, understood?"

Des swallowed silently but hard, and his upbeat mood burst like a soap bubble. That's not a lot of time, he thought. Still, he was pretty confident in himself: "I can do it, boss."

"OK, good, because if you don't, you'll be gone as fast as the guy you just replaced, got it? Sorry to be so blunt, but this is business."

Des took a deep breath and replied in his most serious, mature, and deepest CEO voice: "Absolutely. I understand."

"Good! Well then, have fun!" Chuck hung up without saying goodbye. Des exhaled very slowly through his lips, like a horse, greatly relieved to be done with that particular call.

Rita popped her head in the door. "I'm sorry to interrupt, Mr. Hogan. . . ."