

Business Pet Peeves

Little inconsiderations can have a big impact on your business, your team and your perception in the industry. Sweat this small stuff.

Webster's Dictionary defines a "pet peeve" as a "frequent subject of complaint." We all have pet peeves—those little irritating things that seem to annoy only us, or at least irritate us more than they do our contemporaries. I commenced this month's edition of *Never Finished* with a pet peeve of mine—magazine columns or articles that begin with a definition from a dictionary. If there's a less creative or less inspiring way to entice a reader to continue, I can't imagine what it would be.

Since the lame first sentence wasn't enough to dissuade you from reading on, however, I'll share my list of business pet peeves. For my money, the business world in general and our industry in specific would be much better off if we could dispense with the following:

The Great Name Massacre. Perhaps it's because the "ch" in my name is pronounced like a "k" and I have spent a lifetime correcting those who mispronounce it that I am sensitive to the proper pronunciation of people's names. I recall a partner in the CPA firm I worked for 20 years ago handing out Christmas gifts one year. He didn't pronounce the name of a single one of the five first-year employees correctly. How important did we feel?

to type and have no other option, always ask permission first.

Bluetooth Ear.

Staying on the telephone topic, we all know at least one person who keeps his Bluetooth device stuck in his ear when he's not on the phone.

A friend of mine refers to the Bluetooth as "the pocket protector of the new millennium." That pretty much says it all.

The V Word. It drives me crazy when someone refers to my company or to one of our suppliers as a "vendor." Vendors sell hot dogs at baseball games, and vending machines sell soda and candy bars. Suppliers add value and solve problems for customers. I'm a supplier, not a vendor.

The Email Exclamation Point. The little red exclamation point that shows up next to an email because the sender decided his message was urgent. That thing should be reserved for the likes of critical safety concerns, pressing customer issues and downed production lines. If it's not an emergency, skip the exclamation point. I'm fully capable of deciding for myself whether your email is urgent.

Responses in Red. This often happens when someone copies the questions from the text of another's email into his and then answers the questions in red text. For reasons I can't explain, this always looks angry and defensive. Write your own email or choose a different color.

Copying the World. Somebody, in a fit of rage, decides that the entire population of the earth should be copied on her rant, so she includes everyone she can think of on the cc line. Pointless.

Closed-Door Meetings. Sure, a limited list of topics do require that the office door be closed. Sensitive employee issues are a good example. For everything else, leave the



MATTHEW KIRCHNER, CEO
American Finishing Resources, LLC
mkirchner@afnow.com

For my money, the business world in general and our industry in specific would be much better off if we could dispense with the following ...

"Buddy." While we are on the topic of names, if you don't remember mine, it's alright. Just smile and say hello. Don't try to cover it up by calling me "Buddy."

Executive Parking Spaces. You people who actually do the work, you park back there. We're important; we'll park up here. I can't stand the message this sends, so I park in the back row.

"Do More with Less." Why not just tell your people that you expect them to produce more with fewer resources by working harder and earning less money? Regardless of your intentions when you utter this idiotic phrase, that's how you come across.

The Speaker Phone. Who are you, some hot shot executive from the 1960s? Pick up the receiver or use a headset. If you must use the speaker because you're in a group or need

door open. When the door is closed, everyone on the outside is convinced the meeting is about them. The distraction and paranoia that result aren't worth it.

Delegation Up. This happens when a leader lets a team member assign work to the leader that should be done by the team member. For example, saying to the boss, "I thought maybe you could finish this spreadsheet for me so I can get the quote out to the customer." Leaders who let this happen soon become overwhelmed by tasks that others should be doing.

The Sales/Ops Blame Game. "If these sales people would just close some orders, I could hire some people," or "I would be winning a lot more business if I wasn't so busy fixing mistakes made by the ops guys." Statements like these tear a team apart.

Beginning the Answer to a Question with the Word "Again." "What time are we leaving?" "Again, we'll leave at about six." I find some people do this even when hearing the question for the first time, which, instead of just sounding insulting, is really bizarre.

Leaders Who Speak in Cliches. It drives me nuts when a leader talks about "pulling the team together," "raising it to the next level" or "making it happen." These statements mean nothing and inspire nobody.

"There's Nothing More I Could Have Done." There is always something more you could have done.

Can we make the business world a better place and discontinue the above? Webster's Dictionary defines "discontinue" as "to come to an end." ■■■

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