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The likability factor and connecting with others

The analysis seems simple enough — if people like you, you will be happy and successful. But if it's that easy, then why isn't everyone doing it?

The likability factor — sometimes referred to as the LQ, for likability quotient — remains an elusive concept. There is often an inherent tension and fundamental misunderstanding between the reality and fiction of what makes us likable, what we should do to be more likable and whether it is even important.

And while we may believe we have an intuitive sense of all of these things, we are often shallow and misguided in our notions.

It is only in the past few years that we have even begun a meaningful conversation about likability and its effect on our happiness and success. The simple fact is that we cannot have a robust workforce that will effectively perform over the short and long term if mutual admiration and collegiality do not exist in our workplace.

We cannot effectively create client service teams if our colleagues who are essential to those relationships do not like us and want to help. Given that our professional world now consists of a flat demand for legal services, clients have a multitude of fine lawyers to choose from, and they simply will not work with us if they don't like and respect us on both professional and personal levels.

So, what does it mean to be likable? It means we can readily relate to others, and vice versa. We do so by establishing common ground and parity in our relationships quickly and with ease. We are thoughtful, engaging and focus on those with whom we are interacting in the moment, rather than allowing

ourselves to become distracted and multi-tasking our way through a situation.

We effectively empathize and see clearly the lens through which others view the world. We understand other points of view, demonstrate that we truly hear what people are saying and act in accordance with that understanding. We meaningfully convey that we sense both the good and the bad that others feel and tailor our approach appropriately to the situation at hand and offer our assistance.

We also are authentic and genuine in our communications and create alignment between what we say and what we do. We bring a certain level of excitement to our professional and personal circles because of the passion we bring to all that we do, and that sentiment is contagious.

Those around us feel like they have a strong sense of who we are and what we stand for and enjoy being with us. Indeed, trustworthiness, credibility and predictability are all critical ingredients of being likable.

There are a few underlying themes here. Our ability to connect with others is an essential element of the likability factor. As part of that, we need to

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gain an understanding of what motivates and inspires other people. What are they hoping to achieve, and how can we help them get there? How can we adapt our approach so that what we say and do is most impactful for them?

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Connecting with others is inherently a two-way street, and we need to remember that it is not all about us. In fact, being likable is very little about convincing others how great we are and is much more about our ability to understand people around us.

In determining what makes others tick and uncovering the common ground we all share, we should make a concerted effort to consider different points of view and listen carefully to what others have to say. We also need to be thoughtful in how we respond. Our most powerful communications are strategic and well-timed.

We also should be keenly aware of our strengths and weaknesses and brutally honest with ourselves about what we do well and what we need to work on. We must take a close look at

ourselves and ensure we are attuned to what others really think of us.

The impression we make is a combination of many factors, including our intellect, personality, appearance and demeanor. It is important to have a positive attitude and understand that it is a powerful force that more readily precipitates the desired results upon which our clients and organizations thrive.

We also need to regularly take stock of the nature and quality of our interactions with others. We should be attuned to how we feel during these encounters, both mentally and physiologically. We must listen to our body, and whether we feel settled and balanced, or uneasy. We can pick up on the energy of others and how they are feeling by paying close attention to both verbal and non-verbal social cues.

Sometimes we need to step outside ourselves and actively seek this type of feedback from those around us whom we respect and trust. This may include working with executive coaches and other similar professionals.

In considering what it means to be likable, it is also important to know what it does not mean. Likability is not about winning a popularity contest, nor does it mean that we are pushovers. In our quest to be likable, we must be authentic and comfortable in our own skin. We cannot be everything to everybody, and there will be times when others may not like us, no matter how hard we try. And that's OK.

While we should be sincere in our efforts to understand others and in treating them as we would want to be treated, we also should not take ourselves too seriously. None of us is perfect, and just making a good-hearted effort to connect with others will often go a long way.