

refinement of the CEO was nothing short of impressive. This was in sharp contrast to a day I had spent with a cross section of staff of a large organization. Here, many had been hurt by their managers; people they desperately wanted to trust. The unfortunate truth is the pervasiveness of unpleasant work places, despite considerable evidence confirming that "nice companies" do finish first. Professor Hochwarter of Florida State University interviewed more than 700 people from a variety of industries about the treatment they received from their managers. 31% reported that their supervisor gave them the "silent treatment" during the year. 37% said that their supervisor failed to give credit when due. 27% reported that they had discovered that their supervisor made negative comments about them to other employees or managers. 23% indicated that their supervisor blamed others to cover up mistakes or to minimize embarrassment. There is a significant difference between being "nicer" and exploitation. Good leaders know this and act accordingly. "I am happy to answer a question you might have, but don't ask me to write your marketing plan for you." Shankman's axiom is that the Human Resource Department cannot make a company "nicer" through some clever programme. The conduct of the senior leadership determines whether the company is "nicer" or toxic. If you examine successful companies, Shankman claims, you will find that the people are working together in an atmosphere that is civil and pleasant. Unsurprisingly, there is a growing body of research indicating that bad managers hamper productivity, dent profits and lose business. University of Florida researchers found that people who work for abusive managers are more likely to arrive late, do less work, and are absent more often. In this book, Shankman identifies nine "nicer" traits based on his experience with dozens of CEOs, entrepreneurs, and other leaders, and anecdotal evidence. The trait that underpins all other "nicer" traits is "Enlightened Self-interest." This is the act of doing what benefits you while benefiting others. Adam Smith noted the benefits of enlightened self-interest as early as 1776 in his classic, *Wealth of Nations*. Smith's well-known example is the local butcher who does not sell quality meat because he is altruistic. Rather, sells quality meat because he makes a better profit and ensures your return. Enlightened self-interest is the ultimate combination of the acknowledgement of human nature and strategic thinking. Michael Tompkins, president and general manager of Miraval, a top-rated high-end resort, puts the method for achieving enlightened self-interest succinctly. "When I make a big decision, I think, how is this going to impact the guest experience first, how will the staff be affected, and finally, what's it going to do to me?" Under his management, Miraval received more awards from readers of travel magazines and websites than at any time in its 16-year history. Another trait Shankman identifies is "The Accessibility Factor." A friend of his was in an elevator to the 42nd floor with the president and CEO of his company. When he tried to make pleasant conversation, the CEO nodded, gave a thin smile, and continued to gaze straight ahead. A few years later, the company's share price had fallen, the board was unhappy with the CEO, and he was fired. Clearly he was not fired because he refused to talk to junior staff in the elevator. An inaccessible, aloof CEO can run a successful business for a while, but in the long run he makes a bad leader and destroys the business. Leaders who are inaccessible to all but their peers, communicate a dangerously flawed message. Not everyone's job is valued as prestigious, and not everyone is important to the bottom line. Shankman identifies "Strategic Listening" as one of the traits of a "nicer" company. I asked an audience recently how many of them had taken a public speaking skills course. Many had. Then I asked how many had taken a listening skills course. None had. Rubbermaid's CEO, Wolfgang Schmitt, was infamous for his refusal to listen to others and for making ill-informed decisions. A former colleague remembers that people would joke, "Wolf knows everything about everything." Wolf, unfortunately, did not. Under his know-it-all leadership, Rubbermaid went from being Fortune's most admired company in America in 1993 to an inconsequential company sold to Newell a few years later. Biotech giant Amgen's CEO Kevin Sharer confesses to dismissing or ignoring what others had to say for many years. His epiphany came at a talk by Sam Palmisano, then president and CEO of IBM, who was asked why his experience working in Japan was so important to his leadership development. "I learned to listen by having only one objective: comprehension. I was only trying to understand what the person was trying to convey to me. I wasn't listening to critique or object or convince," he said. "Because as you become a senior leader, it's a lot less about convincing people and more about benefiting from complex information and getting the best out of the people you work with. Listening for comprehension helps you get that information, of course, but it's also the greatest sign of respect you can give someone." However, listening is only a "threshold skill." If you do not listen well, you will fail. Success is not guaranteed if you do not act appropriately on what you hearing, or if you are not competent at analysing what is being said and making sense of it. This is "Strategic Listening." One last story: Shankman was at a meeting with a CEO when a secretary walked in, caught her foot on a piece of rug that had curled up, and tripped. She dropped the 200 collated but not stapled pages that she was carrying. The CEO, in his thousand-dollar suit, jumped up and sat on the floor with the secretary for the next ten minutes, picking up and re-collating the papers. Everyone in the meeting joined in. The result was no harm was done, and no injury to anyone's pride. That CEO's company was acquired last year for about \$ 600 million. "Not bad for a guy sitting on the floor collating papers," Shankman notes. We spend one third of our lives at work. Anything we can do to help make it enjoyable is worth it. Readability: Light +---- Serious Insights: High +--- Low Practical: High ---+ Low* Ian Mann of Gateways consults

internationally on leadership and strategy. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Leadership for the 21st Century By Carolyn M. Appleton I discovered Peter Shankman on social media, I've kept an eye on his company, Vocus, and I've also assisted HARO (helpareporter.com). While preparing a talk for a group of seasoned nonprofit fundraisers in 2012, I included a few insightful observations by Peter like, "Numbers don't matter. What's important is that you understand your audience, know what they want, and give it to them." When I learned about the book, I bought it instantly. Every leader - regardless of organization size - should read it. Peter provides numerous helpful, real-life examples of companies whose leaders know that while providing stakeholder value, "it shouldn't be at the cost of exercising basic human decency and integrity." And, "doing the latter will usually provide the former." I enjoyed every chapter, but especially, "Customer Service-Centric" and the section, "R-E-S-P-E-C-T: Find Out What it Means to Your Customers." Put this book on your "must read" list! 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Now I know I'm not crazy By Amanda Griffith I'm only halfway through this book but I have to say I'm going to get whiplash from the number of times I've nodded my head in agreement or shaken my head in disbelief. It's been a great, quick read with lots of great advice that I'm increasingly realizing my bosses never took which is why I'm now once again my own boss in solo PR practice. I took the book with me to the doctor's office and knew that the wait would fly by as I read the pages. I was there for an hour before I was seen so it's a good thing! The copy is easy to read and the real-world examples, warts and all, add proof points to the words on the page, so that they become more than hollow lessons or recommendations but rather validation that life doesn't have to be status quo.

The era of authoritarian cowboy CEOs like Jack Welch and Lee Iacocca is over. In an age of increasing transparency and access, it just doesn't pay to be a jerk to employees, customers, competitors, or anyone else. In *Nice Companies Finish First*, Shankman, a pioneer in modern PR, marketing, advertising, social media, and customer service, profiles the famously nice executives, entrepreneurs, and companies that are setting the standard for success in this new collaborative world. He explores the new hallmarks of effective leadership, including loyalty, optimism, humility, and a reverence for customer service, and shows how leaders like Jet Blue's Dave Needleman, Tony Hsieh of Zappos, Steve Jobs of Apple, Ken Chenault of Amex, Indra Nooyi of Pepsi, and the team behind Patagonia harness these traits to build productive, open, and happy workplaces for the benefit of their employees, themselves, and the bottom line.

From *Booklist* Shankman, serial entrepreneur, and coauthor Kelly maintain that if you look under the hood of successful companies, you'll find that they are made up of people working together in an atmosphere that is conducive to civility and good cheer. Assuring us that nice companies are highly profitable and niceness doesn't mean being taken advantage of, we learn nice CEOs and managers are the best leaders. With the benefit of extensive interviews, Shankman and Kelly identify nine nice characteristics, which are enlightened self-interest (transactional benefits of what you do each day); the accessibility factor; strategic listening; good stewardship (good corporate citizens); loyalty (to what works for the whole company and for all good employees); optimism (correlation between positive emotions and positive outcomes); customer service-centric; merit-based competitor (which constantly improves its business); and caring about the business and the people who are part of it and are impacted by it. Shankman and Kelly conclude with rules, including separating oneself from the pack and paying attention. A thought-provoking book for a new generation of leaders. --Mary Whaley "Looks at how treating customers really well can bring huge dividends in the era when customers can share information instantly on social networking sites like Twitter and Facebook, it's more important than ever for companies to keep them happy." Forbes.com "Shankman contends that in the long run, leaders who show loyalty, optimism, humility, and a reverence for customer service will create both profits and a happy workforce. He explains how their thoughtfulness and willingness to collaborate helped them create solid bottom lines for their businesses and happy workplaces." *Upstart Business Journal* "The book's anti-Machiavellian approach is trendy and humanistic, and it bears repeating by thought leaders." *Publishers Weekly* "A corporate consultant argues that kinder, gentler corporate leaders and corporations are winning out over older, tougher images of take-no-prisoners leadership... A smoothly put together business leadership primer." *Kirkus* "Excellent, thought-provoking book for a new generation of leaders." *Booklist* "As CEO of one of the fastest-growing clothing lines in the world, I greatly admire Peter Shankman's strategies and techniques, and have implemented many of them at SCOTTEVEST. I highly recommend this book if you are a business owner or entrepreneur trying to build a unique brand and truly productive work environment." Scott Jordan, CEO, Scottestest "Shankman has put in a wakeup call for leaders to examine each of their daily interactions from the bottom to top. Through memorable examples, he offers straightforward and practical advice on how to conduct oneself in a way that will lead to win-win relationships with the people that matter most - essentially everybody in our world." Leigh Thompson, professor, Kellogg School of Management and author of *Creative Conspiracy*. "Fresh thinking that feels familiar. And it should - we've been told 'play nice' since we were kids. But Peter expands the thought to encompass flexibility, compassion and the secret sauce: collaboration." Cathy Calhoun, president, North America, Weber

Shandwick About the Author Peter Shankman is the founder of Help a Reporter Out (HARO), the largest free source repository for journalists in the world, as well as the founder and CEO of The Geek Factory, Inc., a 15-year-old marketing, branding, and PR company based in New York City with clients worldwide. His PR and social media clients have included AmEx, Sprint, the US Department of Defense, Royal Bank of Canada, Snapple, Saudi Aramco, Walt Disney World, Discovery Networks, Harrah's Hotels, and many others. He is the author of Can We Do That?!, which has been named one of the six "must read" PR books by PR Channel, and Customer Service: New Rules for a Social-Enabled World. He is a frequent speaker and has presented at such venues as South by Southwest, BlogWorld, The Public Relations Society of America, and many other trade shows. Shankman sits on the advisory boards of several companies, as well as on the NASA Civilian Advisory Council.