

WALK IN OTHERS' SHOES

Understand your clients' and coworkers' world. Know their challenges and frustrations. See things from their perspective. The better you understand them, the more effectively you can anticipate and meet their needs.

Sounds easy but this is a tough one. How do you actually “walk in someone else’s shoes?” Can we really do it? Sociological research shows that when people jumped the line in airports or a line to get drivers licenses, that 97% of the people were upset with this rude behavior. However, if the person who jumped the line explained **why** they needed to do so, people were much less upset. For example, when the jumper said, “I am sorry, but I have to pick up my kids from school in 10 minutes, do you mind if I slide in ahead of you?” 80% of time people were not upset by the jumpers actions. This difference in understanding the motivation for actions, even if perceived rude in under some circumstances can help people be much more forgiving.

Steven Covey in his seminal best seller, which I highly recommend, *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, suggests that highly effective people, “first seek to understand, then be understood” before jumping in with either criticism or problem solving. – Here’s more from him:

Use empathetic listening to genuinely understand a person, which compels them to reciprocate the listening and take an open mind to being influenced by you. This creates an atmosphere of caring, and positive problem solving.

The Habit 5 is greatly embraced in the Greek philosophy represented by 3 words:

1. Ethos - your personal credibility. It’s the trust that you inspire, your Emotional Bank Account.
2. Pathos is the empathetic side -- it’s the alignment with the emotional trust of another person communication.
3. Logos is the logic -- the reasoning part of the presentation.

The order is important: ethos, pathos, logos -- your character, and your relationships, and then the logic of your presentation.

This is an important lesson. Once we understand the human element behind any action, we are “walking in someone else’s shoes” and it makes all the difference in the world. As we do our work and take the time and initiative to understand others around us, we are in a much better position to help and also be heard.

