

# WHAT'S LOVE GOT TO DO WITH IT?

By Julius E. Rhodes, SPHR

Once heard someone say that people long for the good old days and that for our children, these are the good old days. It's true—most of us remember with great fondness our childhoods and the things we did to make those times special.

Recently, I flew to Baltimore. As I handed my boarding pass to the gate agent, I was greeted with, "Hello, Mr. Rhodes." This is not unusual as I am a very frequent flier who typically visits between 25 and 30 states a year, and my name is clearly printed on my boarding pass. However, what happened next amazed me.

## Recognition

The gate agent, whom I didn't recall meeting before, said, "Thanks for the human resources class and have a nice day." This really caught me off guard as it has been at least a decade since I regularly instructed a college-level course. As I wobbled down the jetway stunned by the comment I had just received, I asked the forward galley flight attendant if he could help me by identifying the gate agent and where I might have been an instructor for him.

I sat impatiently trying to figure out where I knew the gate agent from and hoping the forward galley flight attendant would provide me with a clue. After what seemed like forever, the flight attendant returned and told me that the individual's name was Brandon and that I taught him at Governors State University outside of Chicago. He went on to say that Brandon told him he was always impressed with my presentation and demeanor and the way I engaged the students in the class; I made him and others feel like we were equals.

## For Professionals

Wow! What a compliment. I have always said that your personal brand should and must speak for you before you even open your mouth and linger long after you have left the room. Even so, having someone remember me that well after 14 years is incredible, even for my expectations.

Here is what I have taken away from that experience that leverages your personal brand and leadership:

- **Be consistent, gracious, and appreciative.** We all have issues that could cause us to shut down physically and emotionally. However, other people face the same things. We should never let our personal issues (except in extreme cases) interfere with our ability to connect with others.

- **Evenly accept compliments and complaints.**

Each has the ability to add to your personal brand and your potential to be seen as a leader. We are never as good or bad as someone might make us out to be, so balance is essential.

- **Create value for others.**

This creates value for you and enhances your ability to lead. Brandon, by virtue of recognizing me and being comfortable enough to share that with me, offered a valuable gift: a level of verification that things upon which I speak are tangible. In the next few days, I will again be traveling. As I depart from my home base in Chicago, I will be looking for Brandon so I can return the kindness and consideration he showed me.

This leads me to an essential point as it relates to your personal brand and your ability to lead: Always say thank you. Brandon, even if you never read this article, I want to thank you for helping me feel good about what I tried to do for you 14 years ago and what you did for me 14 years later.

What's love got to do with it? As you contemplate developing and displaying your personal brand and standing as a leader, love has everything to do with how you think of yourself, what people see in you, and how they connect with you. It's just like Og Mandino said: "Do all things with love."



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