As leaders, we know the importance of good relationships, liking who you work with and having those individuals like you back. In this environment, goals are achieved with much greater ease and results are better. But being a leader doesn't mean we'll be liked by everyone or liked for all the decisions we have to make. Balancing the want and the need to be liked can be a rather delicate process.

Great Leaders Work Hard to Be Likable and Then Let Go of the Need to Be Liked

by Cheryl Cran

The entertainment industry knows how to 'spin' a story so that it is well received by the public. Behind every celebrity story there is a well paid publicist who has worked to make the story show the celebrity as favorable as possible. As leaders, we don't want to 'spin' anything but we do want to acknowledge that we can 'get more bees with honey' and this means being likable.

Great leaders understand that in order to move change forward, they need to be as likable as possible with the majority of their team. When I think of the context of 'likable,' it means being able to relate to diverse personalities, understand gender perspectives and generational attitudes.

The 'likable' traits include the following:

- friendly
- approachable
- receptive to input and feedback
- share stories of personal life
- hear people with an empathetic ear
- mentor and inspire higher performance
- knowledge of the facts
- results focused

These likability elements help a leader to influence most people and encourage them to come along for the ride of the future. The challenge for a lot of leaders is that they work hard to become likable and then they hang on to the need to be liked. A great leader has learned to integrate the elements of being likable along with detachment from actually being liked.

Even the most likable leaders have enemies or people who just don't like them. It takes a high level of self confidence and skill confidence for a leader to be able to detach from the need to be liked.
I have a client who I have been coaching for a few months and she is highly likable. In fact her personality is known for being someone who is easily liked. The challenge is that her identity is so entrenched in being known as a 'nice person' that her team has resorted to some pretty scary tactics in order to work their way around her.

The result is that this leader is hurt and feels betrayed. After all, she has been so nice! The reality is that she focused too much on being likable but was not successful in letting go of the need to be liked. Her opportunity now is to stand up for herself, re-affirm her decisions and direction and communicate to her team that she will be moving forward with specific decisions and that she realizes that not everyone will like the decisions. Once she has communicated her decisions to her team she then needs to sit down personally with each of her team members to clarify what the decisions means to them as individuals.

Strong leadership is really so much about having a strong personal identity while at the same time not being attached to how others perceive you. At the end of the day you will have more success and less stress as a leader if you build confidence around your strengths, work to be likable and then let GO of the need to be liked. RL

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Cheryl is a leadership, change and business growth expert. She is the published author of four books and her fifth book ***Leading Across the Digital Divide*** is due out in Spring 2013.

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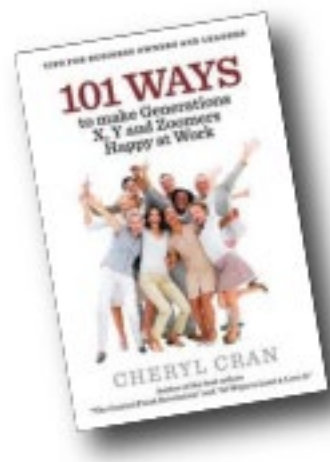
Cheryl's presentations on leading change in a fast-paced, technological and multi-generational workplace include real-life examples and case studies along with practical solutions. Audiences love her direct approach to leadership and strategic management. She provides insights and strategies that help leaders to grow their leadership and change management skills so that the business can grow to the next level.

Her bestselling book, ***101 Ways to Make Generations X, Y and Zoomers Happy at Work*** provides strategies for companies to better lead and manage in a multiple generations in the workplace.