

# The Jerk Advantage—Do You Have It?

## By Dan Gregory & Kieran Flanagan

Jerks stand for something better and bigger and bolder. They change things. And they don't care if you like them.

Steve Jobs has been quoted so often it is almost a cliché. Why? Because Apple has consistently been rated as one of the most influential and innovative companies of our time. And yet, by most accounts, Jobs was not the nicest guy to work with. In fact many claim he was a jerk.

So the question is this: Does being nice matter as much as we tell ourselves it does? Or is nice something we get to be when we are happy to accept the status quo?

The revolutionaries, the people who have changed and who are changing the world, are not always popular or loved by all. They are not always nice. They challenge things. They go against the grain. All of them have a willingness to be unpopular, to be a jerk, not for the sake of being a jerk but for the sake of something that matters to them.

That's not to say, "Go ahead, be a jerk." Sure, sometimes there is a distinct advantage to not giving a damn what people think about you. Because when you are willing to be disliked, you gain a power most of us struggle with—the power of doing what is right rather than popular. The power of non-conformity.

We all need to acknowledge that part of ourselves, the part that can stand strong in the face of criticism, pressure to conform and get along. Sometimes we need to rock the boat. Sometimes we need to find and release our inner jerk.

How? Do what "jerks" do:

### 1. Jerks speak up.

Your mom always said, "If you don't have something nice to say, don't say anything at all." But that's not really the best advice when it comes to changing something you believe in. If you are passionate about an issue, it is better to think, If I don't have anything nice to say, I need to speak up bravely, prepare to be hated and fight for what I believe in.

Throughout history, so many people sat by and said nothing because they feared being isolated and shunned. We still do it today. We sit quietly when we should shout. In those moments when your instincts tell you otherwise, think like a jerk—think for yourself and say something.

### 2. Jerks speak the truth.

Jerks don't lie to be polite. They speak the truth even when there will be fallout. This does not mean being brutally honest when someone asks, "Does my butt look big in this?" It means speaking a truth that needs to be spoken. It means having the courage to tell the emperor (or even ourselves) that he is wearing no clothes, that sort of truth.

### 3. Jerks stand against something.

"If you're not getting stabbed in the back, you're not leading the way." This quote reminds us that jerks are not jerks in the eyes of everyone, just some people. They are jerks to the people they rile against. To the systems, injustices, prejudices they look to topple. So find your inner jerk and stand against the things that drive you mad. Lead thinking. Lead a revolution and lead the change you want to see in your world,

community, office, house or even yourself.

#### **4. Jerks stand for something.**

Be a jerk on purpose. Both deliberately and for a purpose.

Being a jerk for no reason other than you are in a bad mood makes you another expletive we shall not mention in print. But you get the jerk advantage when you see something more for your people, your team or if you want to aim big, the world.

#### **5. Jerks ignore the haters.**

You get the jerk advantage when you do not actually care that some people might hate you. In life not everyone will like us. If we are too nice, they might say we are fake. If we are forthright, they may call us rude. The point is, haters gonna hate. So when it comes to haters, be a jerk about it and get on with getting what you want.

If we want to change things (big or small) we have to be willing to cope with some criticism, to not please everyone and to stand strong. If our motives are good, then being a jerk is a pretty good thing to be.

Jerks don't need to be liked.

Jerks speak out.

They stand up.

And they stand out.

Jerks stand for something better and bigger and bolder.

Jerks change things.

So next time you are out to make a change, to do something big and bold, don't be offended if someone calls you a jerk or something worse. It means you are doing something potentially great.