

Nobody Is ‘Just’ Anything

While working at a manufacturing plant, Steve Harrison – now the chairman of career management services company Lee Hecht Harrison – learned an important truth early in his career.

At that manufacturing plant, Harrison was authorized to approve relatively small purchases, such as office supplies. One morning shortly after Harrison had taken on this responsibility, a salesman showed up for his appointment.

Because Harrison was busy opening his mail when the salesman arrived, he decided to finish that job, which would take 10 to 15 minutes, before talking to the salesman. As decisions go, it didn't seem particularly noteworthy.

However, Harrison's boss, the plant manager, saw matters quite differently. When he arrived and saw the salesman waiting in the reception area, the plant manager charged into Harrison's office and demanded the identity of the person waiting.

Sealing his own fate with his unthinking choice of words, Harrison answered, "Oh, he's just a salesman."



For the plant manager, that wouldn't do. No one – not even someone hoping to make money from the company – was to be treated in a way that said, "You are not very important."

It wasn't just a matter of basic decency, but also a matter of reputation and the example a leader should set.

The plant manager understood a lesson all leaders should take to heart. Your associates will watch how you act and follow suit – or become alienated by it. Salespeople and suppliers will spread the word about what it's like to do business with you.

Those 10 or 15 minutes (as Harrison discovered) can turn out to be an important time in the life of our companies, so recognize them for what they're worth and act accordingly.

Life Care and Century Park are in the relationship-building business, and kindness is an important building block. Let's prove it in all our personal and professional interactions.

Whoever pursues righteousness and kindness will find life, righteousness, and honor (Proverbs 21:21 ESV).