

Naughty or nice? A 4-point checklist for your employees



OK, all you boss types. Christmas is closing in and it's time to play Santa Claus.

The gifts to your workers are optional, but what's involved here is the book. The book with all the names of your employees and all that they've done all year. You know, who was naughty and who was nice.

If you haven't been making a list and checking it twice, no worries.

Here is your guide to making a last-minute register of things employees do (or should do and don't) and whether it passes muster.

Go the extra mile.

Naughty: You know Dan. His PC screen is dark at 5 sharp and he's got an upbeat gait as he's headed for the elevator. Seems Dan gains energy at the end of the day. Dan does what he's supposed to and nothing more. Volunteer to pitch in when the work builds up or to help fill in for absent co-workers? Not Dan. Technically, he's not quite naughty. But he's certainly not nice.

Nice. Tina's a team player. When she's caught up with her work, she'll ask co-workers if they need a hand and she follows through. Caution: Some employees will shout out *"Anyone need some help?"* only when you're there to hear it. Not Tina. But her type is somewhat scarce around the office.

Complaining.

Naughty: Everyone gripes now and then, but what you're looking for here is the bellyaching that is really veiled backstabbing. *"I didn't have the report on time because Julie's always late with her numbers. I mean if she didn't always take those long lunches ..."* Julie was scapegoated, and your complainer crossed the naughty line.

Nice: Sometimes complaints are legitimate and helpful toward the company's goals. *"The printer is always a day or two late with our order, doesn't return calls and has increased the price,"* Debbie complains to you. Debbie's gripes are business-related and have an eye on the bottom line.

Willingness to learn.

Naughty: You hire people to grow with the company, to innovate, to advance in the ranks as they acquire new skills. What happened to Sam? He talked a good game during his interview, especially with his suave answer to *“Where do you see yourself in five years?”* but it seems he has no interest in learning anything new. If you’re happy with Sam’s status quo approach, you can bump him to the “Nice” pile—at *your* peril.

Nice: For most employees, learning new things on the job is survival. Whether the motivation is self-preservation or it’s a genuine interest in gaining new skills out of passion for the career and company, you need learners. Heather wants to attend skill-building seminars and is inquisitive about how other departments operate. She’s the real deal. But you risk losing Heather to the competitor if you don’t take care of her. Be nice to her in return.

Participating in company culture.

Naughty: The morale in your workplace lives and dies on camaraderie. To that end, you celebrate employees’ birthdays with a sheet cake and silliness; you revel over that big contract you landed with a catered lunch; and you thank the staff for a busy day with a pizza delivery. It brings the troops together. But not Ken. With hands in pockets, he ambles into the party, leans against the wall, refuses the cake (didn’t sign the card either), and cuts back to his desk when he can get away with it. He made his cameo appearance and worst of all, he’ll badmouth the whole thing to anyone willing to listen to him. *“Why do we do these dumb things?”* he asks. You’re naughty, Ken.

Nice. For every Ken, you have a Cherie. She’s not only the one to make all the parties and games fun, she organized them. Cherie’s a planner and has the knack to cull a group to help her out. She sees the need for a respite over the hard work and you should, too. If it comes at the expense of some of her other work for the moment, so what? She always makes it up. There’s value to what she does. Cherie’s too busy to notice Ken’s apathetic attitude, and if she did, she doesn’t care.

But you ought to.