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Self-Help

**Charming Your Way To the Top: Hollywood's Premier P.R. Executive Shows You How To Get Ahead**

Michael Levine
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Imagine Cary Grant. Wouldn't he be a great dinner companion? Co-worker? Next-door neighbor? According to the author, that's because Cary Grant was the most charming person in recorded history. Certainly, his "chiseled" good looks had something to do with his appeal, but his charisma was more than superficial. As someone once said, "There's nothing quite so charming as someone who likes you." Cary made others believe that he liked them by focusing his full attention on them when they spoke, listening and understanding their issues, responding with warmth and wit, and seeing to their needs and desires.

Although one can be successful through talent and hard work alone, people who inspire positive feelings in others are more likely to advance when everything else is equal. Its natural to like folks who are likeable. It's only human to open doors for smiling faces. Thus, being charming maximizes ones chances for success. Those who don't practice this art have to jump more hurdles than their more affable colleagues do.

Levine believes that the business world lacks charm these days. Its not that it doesn't exist, but that its so rarely practiced. How often, he asks, do people thank others for business lunches? Or follow up with handwritten notes? Although there are societal rules about interactions with clients, co-workers, employees, suppliers, family, strangers, etc., these small courtesies are only tools. They do not constitute charm itself. Natural gestures are most effective, because they reflect sincerity and spontaneity—qualities that come from the heart rather than from a book of etiquette.

Levine has been called “one of Hollywood’s brightest and most respected executives” by *USA Today*, and he has represented many celebrities, ranging from Barbra Streisand to Kareem Abdul Jabar. He has written several how-to guides, including the “Guerilla P.R.” series and *Raise Your Social I.Q.: The Case for Civility in an Increasingly Vulgar Age*.

Levine maintains that although charm can be an indefinable quality that makes an individual special, its also something that can be cultivated—and this is the core concept of his book. He explains that “charm is a personality trait but it’s also a practice, and should be treated like any practice—the more you use it, the more proficient you will be.” However, he emphasizes that the point is to practice extending yourself for another person, not just practice writing thank-you notes.

In this clear, light-hearted, easy-to-read book, Levine uses anecdotes to elucidate his points. His style makes it clear that he is a man who not only knows charm when he sees it, but also embodies it. For anyone interested in the power of personal influence, understanding the mechanics of charm might be a useful skill.