

# the Kindness Connection



## Connecting Communities Through Kindness

### Kindness in Business

An Interview with . . .

**Olivia McIvor**

Manager, Human Resources  
B.C. Region, Canada Trust



#### What does kindness mean to you?

Kindness is a word that conjures up other words for me like respect, integrity, gentleness. In a business context, kindness is a very tangible way of making mutual respect actionable.

#### This past October, Canada Trust celebrated its first Kindness to Colleagues Week. What motivated you to introduce this program?

I've been working on anti-violence programs in the workplace for a while now. By violence, I am referring to the continuum, ranging from disrespect to death. According to some research studies, Canada is rated as #4 in the world for violence in the workplace. I believe that if co-workers were kinder, more respectful of each other, many of these acts of violence could be prevented. I am referring to cases of internal violence, where, for instance, an ex-employee, feeling betrayed or alienated from his/her colleagues, commits an act of violence against his/her former colleagues. Acts of violence are not committed against organizations but against people - colleagues who are perceived as not having been supportive. Had these people, already in a vulnerable state, felt more support or compassion from their co-workers, I think these acts of violence would not have happened. In the case of external violence, for example, a bank robbery committed by an outsider, a kindness program in the workplace may not directly prevent such acts of violence but such a program would help employees deal with the emotional impact of such acts. I don't think we fully appreciate how stressful and damaging such events are in an employee's life.

#### What were some of the steps that you took that led to the Kindness to Colleagues Week?

The first step was becoming very clear about my values and the outcome I wanted. I looked at where I wanted to see the organization in 2-5 years...My vision is an organization where heart and soul is infused throughout the organization. There is a

sense that our corporate soul has been awakened. We truly recognize that our employees are our most valuable asset and we treat them that way. We look at the whole employee. We allow them to be all that they can be personally and professionally. There is a sense of teamwork beyond the superficial. There is greater sincerity, warmth, loyalty, a sense that everyone is supportive of each other. We offer programs which give our employees life-altering skills - for finding passionate work, reducing stress, building greater self-esteem. Employees know and feel that we care about who they are, not just what they are. I believe this is what is going to distinguish businesses in the new millennium.

The next step was to find a professional, socially acceptable venue for introducing kindness. We already had a lot of programs which covered themes like honouring diversity, healthy living, anti-violence and building community. I knew that if a program was to survive, it could not exist in isolation. To be effective, programs must be integrated and woven into the cultural fiber of an organization.

#### As I was looking for a way to link all our initiatives under one actionable roof, I realized that kindness was the umbrella that brought all our programs together: kindness to oneself, to each other and to our community.

We introduced a Conference Board on the intranet. On this board, we posted inspirational quotations, stories of kindness in the workplace, ideas on how to be kind to oneself and interesting information on wellness. Employees were invited to visit this

site at their initiative. This site has become a bit of a sanctuary and has now become so popular that we are receiving contributions from our employees. We have received everything from healthy recipes to personal stories that warm the heart. Being a sponsor/partner of Clam Chowder for the Soul, we had received a block of tickets to the event. This provided me with a window for introducing Kindness to Colleagues. Employees were invited to submit stories of kind acts that they witnessed their colleagues performing. In exchange for their story, they would receive a ticket to Clam Chowder for the Soul or a set of books consisting of a Chicken Soup for the Soul book and a Random Acts of Kindness book. The names of both the nominators (employees who reported the kind act) and

the nominees were then entered into a draw. The person's whose name was called would then receive two Black Diamond Points. The Black Diamond Awards Ceremony is a very prestigious event which honours accomplishment within the workplace. This program is very popular and extremely well received by our employees.



*continued on page 3*

# How You and Your Organization Can Participate in Spreading Kindness!

## ★ Create a workplace kindness corner.

This is a place where you can post inspiring stories and quotations that touch the heart and soul. You can devote an area in your organization's newsletter, staff bulletin board, or create a Conference Board on your company's internal internet. Welcome the participation and contributions of your employees.

## ★ Start staff meetings with a heart-warming anecdote or an inspiring quotation. Invite your colleagues' insights and reflections.

## ★ Encourage kind acts within the workplace.

"Caught You In The Act of Doing Something Kind": Have employees submit stories of kind acts they witnessed their co-workers performing. Collect the names of the people submitting the story and the people who committed the acts of kindness. Enter the names in a draw and give the winners a gift along the theme of: kindness to oneself, to each other and within the community. These can be self-care packages, tickets to inspiring events or books that nurture the body and soul.

"A Secret Buddy Day": Have all the names of employees put into a hat and ask each employee to pull out a name of a co-worker. As that person's "secret buddy", your job is to select a symbolic gift (under \$10) that you know your co-worker will enjoy and give it to him / her anonymously. This is a wonderful way for co-workers to get to know each other as they will need to research what is personally meaningful to their buddy.

## ★ Encourage kind acts to your patrons.

Start a "Random Acts of Kindness Day" within your organization. During that day, give your clients gifts at random and show them you care. For example, you may decide to pick up the tab for their coffee, give them a discount on their purchase or hand them a rose.

## ★ Turn adverse situations into a kindness moment.

Even in stressful moments, it is possible to create a pleasant customer service experience for your patrons. For example, if a customer is struggling to find that extra change, meanwhile holding up a long line of anxious clients, smile and say the "change is on us". Cover the missing amount from the "kindness change box".

Wherever you feel that it is appropriate, feel free to use our KindActs' calling card. This calling card can be left at the scene of a kind act. The purpose of the card is to increase people's awareness of kindness and to provide the recipient of the kind act with a way of sharing their story, should they choose to. On the card is our

515-KIND phone number and our website address, [www.kindacts.net](http://www.kindacts.net). Selected stories can be posted in your organization's kindness corner and on our web site. If you would like to have your own company's logo and inspirational message printed on the KindActs' calling card, contact us at (604) 515-KIND (5463).

## ★ Become an Ambassador of Kindness.

We would like to acknowledge and celebrate business as a powerful agent for positive change. With every business who becomes an active partner in kindness, we will add your logo or name to our Partners in Kind virtual billboard, which will be posted on our website and linked to the World Kindness Website. What an opportunity to get world-wide recognition as a community that cares!

## ★ Organize a Kindness to Colleagues week within your organization.

Canada Trust (B.C. Region) has put out a kindness challenge to local businesses. Their goal is to have at least 20 businesses per year join them in celebrating Kindness to Colleagues week. If you would like to receive a Kindness to Colleagues Kit or would like someone to present the concept to your organization, contact Olivia McIvor at Canada Trust, (604) 641-4745.

## ★ Become a partner in a journey to join and touch hearts: The Cycling for Kindness Journey.

On February 26th, 2000, Brock Tully and a devoted team are embarking on a 7-month cycling journey that will start in Vancouver and encircle North America, returning for a homecoming celebration on September 17th. The journey's primary focus is to raise awareness of the importance of kindness and to inspire people to take positive action in their own lives, communities and workplaces. Tied into the journey is a series of Town Hall Forums in 30 major cities in North America. These forums provide opportunities for people to connect through the sharing of kindness stories. The stories are being collected via the Internet and selected stories will be published in the Cyclopedia of Kindness. For information on how your business can take part in this landmark event, call Brock Tully at (604) 687-1099.

## ★ Sign for Kindness!

Help us reach our goal of raising one million signatures in support of kindness by November 13, 2000 - the first World Kindness Day!!! Start a kindness book in your company and collect signatures from clients, business associates and employees. Challenge other branches of your company or neighbouring businesses to see who can collect the greatest support for kindness. For more information, call us at (604) 515-KIND (5463).

## An Interview with . . . Olivia McIvor

### What were some of the challenges you faced and how did you overcome them?

My main challenge was introducing the word kindness into the business environment. Kindness is not a word you hear in business too often. You hear about respect, integrity. I wanted the word "kindness" because for me, kindness takes respect and integrity to the next level - into action. It is a paradigm shift.

I knew that I needed to link kindness to every facet of the organization. I approached our PR Manager, our Senior Regional VP and our Retail Marketing Manager. The response was very positive.

In light of the merger, they recognized the importance and the need for our organization to pull together as a team. Kindness is a very tangible and actionable way to bring people together. I also wrote to every branch manager. We received 99% buy-in from our branch managers. Wherever we could, we found ways to link kindness with existing initiatives, like our Black Diamonds Award, Healthy Living Programs, Gallup Opinion Survey and community service initiatives. The support of senior management helped professionalize the program and the buy-in of managers helped execute it.

### What advice would you have for someone who wants to introduce kindness in their organization?

- Know your corporate culture and work with it.

- Know the players and get senior executive buy-in. You need to have a very good, trusting relationship with these key players. If you do not have a direct relationship with senior management, find someone who is in a position of influence who can support you in introducing your ideas.
- Use a top-down approach to launch your kindness initiative and use a bottom-up approach to execute it.
- Know how this initiative fits into your organization and how it adds value to your organization. Link it with existing initiatives.
- Organize a team of people who believe in you and the benefits of the program and are prepared to champion it.

### What keeps you motivated?

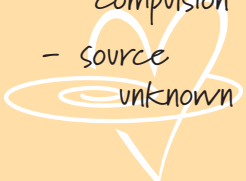
The success stories. Whenever I feel discouraged, I remind myself of where I am now, compared to where I was. I remind myself that change occurs, one person at a time.

### What's next?

I would like to challenge other businesses to introduce a Kindness to Colleagues week within their organization. I want to see at least 20 businesses per year join us in spreading kindness in a very overt way. There is strength in numbers and by bringing more businesses on board with the concept Kindness to Colleagues, we can have a positive impact on the business sector by showing that business is a kind place to work, one act at a time and one person at a time.

"To cultivate kindness is a valuable part of the business of life"  
-Samuel Johnson

"Kindness has more power than compulsion"  
- source unknown



## 'KINDNESS COUNTS' - THE VICTORIA EXAMPLE

"A simple smile goes a mile", states a Langford student.

In the Spring of 1996, the Victoria Kindness Group, in partnership with BC Transit and ICBC launched their "Ride Kind - Drive Kind" program, part of the "Kindness Counts" campaign. BC Transit's challenge was to increase the quality of the experience of riding on the buses (and thereby ridership); to be proactive in promoting kindness and courtesy in the community; and to involve school children in the process. ICBC's challenge was to link, in the mind of the public, the direct relationship between kindness, courtesy and road safety.



Elementary students were invited to create posters depicting the importance of kindness in promoting road safety. Selected artwork and slogans were then displayed over a three month period on over 175 Victoria buses and were seen by as many as 60,000 bus riders and auto drivers daily! For more information on the current and planned activities of The Victoria Kindness Group, call Craig Harrold at residence: (250) 477-1256 or business: (250) 952-8322.

# Up Coming Events

## Porridge for the Soul

**First Tuesday of every month at 7:00 am**

Not just another breakfast meeting but an ongoing opportunity to enjoy connecting with inspirational speakers and like-minded individuals. Join us at 7:00 am the first Tuesday of every month at the Canadian Memorial Centre for Peace, 1825 West 16th Avenue. Admission is \$12. Contact Janine Tasaka at 669-0540. After February 26th, contact Darrell Ross at 689-0553.

## Taking It to the Streets

**December 25th, 1999, 7:00 - 3:00 pm**

What does a C.E.O. of a large corporation, a shoe salesperson, a 13-year old youth and a 40 year-old homeless person have in common? All are touched by Taking It to the Streets, a project that originated in 1995 with the purpose of rekindling the true spirit of Christmas - giving for the love of giving. Warm clothing, food, and gifts from the heart are just some of the items that are being given out that day. The project is run by a group of individuals who care and want to share. The group has no religious or political affiliations or motives. If you would like to take part in this event or have items you would like to donate, please contact Ruth Ho at 876-2610.

## Cycling for Kindness

**February 26th - September 17th, 2000**

A journey to join and touch hearts

A seven-month cycling journey that will bring individuals, businesses and communities across North America together through kindness. Contact Brock Tully at 687-1099. After February 26th, contact Nadine Marshall at 733-1283.

## Clam Chowder for the Soul

**Saturday, September 23rd, 2000**

Recognizing business as a powerful agent for positive change

A special one-day event where community and business leaders share their stories of how they are making a positive difference in their community. Contact Janine Tasaka at 669-0540. After February 26th, contact Darrell Ross at 689-0553.

## The Kindness Conference

**Sunday, September 24th, 2000**

A Forum for the sharing of ideas, stories and kindness initiatives

Contact Nadine Marshall at 733-1283 or Brock Tully at 687-1099.

## Just Singin'Round

**First Wednesday of every month at 7:00 pm**

Bringing creativity and caring together for a more compassionate society

Just Singin'Round takes place at the Vancouver Rowing Club on the first Wednesday of every month. It is an evening where talented singer/songwriters have an opportunity to showcase their music in a friendly and supportive environment, all the while raising funds for local charities. Suggested donation is \$10. KindActs is honoured to be the feature charitable cause for the months of March and July, 2000. For more information, contact Yvonne McSkimming at 669-4387.

"I think subconsciously we create crises such as war to bring us together; but when we have 'us' and 'them', no one really wins - as we become more conscious, we begin to see we can come together without these crises; and the only way we can win is to see we are 'one'"

- Brock Tully

**"Kindness is more than deeds. It is an attitude, an expression, a look, a touch. It is anything that lifts another person"**

- C. Neil Strait

1ST EDITION, 1999

### The Kindness Connection:

A KindActs Initiative

### Artistic Direction & Printing:

Allegra Print & Imaging ~ Burnaby / Surrey



### Editor, Writer & Publisher:

Nadine Marshall

### The Kindness Connection Name:

Amy Dauphinee

### Contributing Input & Inspiration:

Olivia McIvor, Canada Trust

The KindActs Team

The Cycling for Kindness Team

The Victoria Kindness Group

The Kindness Movement & Affiliated Groups

The Clam Chowder for the Soul Team

You, Our Reader



3059 West King Edward Ave.

Vancouver, B.C. V6L 1V4

Tel. (604) 515-KIND (5463)

Fax. (604) 733-7143

www.kindacts.net