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"Nice Bike" — The Importance Of Making Meaningful Connections

By Mark Scharenbroich, award-winning author of the book, *Nice Bike – Making Meaningful Connections on the Road of Life*



I once flew to Milwaukee for a speaking engagement and rented a beige Ford Taurus for my trip to the event. Once under way, I was suddenly surrounded by thousands of black leather, bandana-wearing, hardcore Harley-Davidson bikers who had traveled across the world for Harley-Davidson's 100th year anniversary celebration.

I've never been on a Harley, dreamed of owning a Harley, or even thought of myself as a Harley kind of a guy. But that day in my bland rental car — I wanted a Harley. I wanted to be a part of the Harley gathering, part of the Harley tribe.

As I watched the interactions among bikers, two words surfaced that seemed to create a great connection. A stranger would walk by a rider, glance at their Harley, and simply say, "Nice bike."

It really hit me that once our basic needs are met, we all have two core needs. First, we need to belong to a family, a faith community, a great company, a united team. We need to feel connected. Second, we need to hear, "Nice bike," which translates to "I see you, I hear you, and I appreciate you. This world, this organization, or this community is a better place because you're in it. You belong."

"Nice bike." It was the gold star on your paper in elementary school. It was being invited to sit at a lunch table in middle school. It was the high school teacher remembering your name on the second day of classes. It's the smile from a stranger during your travels. It's a manager taking the time to let you know how much you mean to an organization.

"Nice bike" is supported by three powerful steps:

1. Acknowledgement — let people know that who they are and what they do matters.
2. Honor — honor other people and know what's important — not to ourselves — but to them. It's serving others with a sense of passion.
3. Connect — Make a connection. Create a bond — large or small — that makes a difference in the life of someone else.

Here is a perfect example of "Nice bike" in the workplace. I spoke for Encompass, one of the largest personal insurance brands in America. My presentation closed out a three-day meeting of 200 key leaders and managers for Encompass. After my presentation, Cynthia Young, the president of Encompass, came back to the podium to close out the event. To thank the members of the meeting's planning team, Young went beyond the norm and gave each person their own "Nice bike." She shared something personal about each person — their hobbies, families, service to the community, etc. — something unique about each person. Why does Young have such a dedicated team at Encompass? She acknowledges, honors, and connects with each and every team member.

Find out about your team — know what they value and "Nice bike" them. It builds a better team and makes for a more meaningful ride through life.