

Nice Guys End Up in Court

by Dennis J. Merley - Thursday, February 07, 2019



Hall of Fame Baseball Manager [Leo Durocher](#) was quoted as saying “Nice Guys Finish Last.” Based on a recent [federal court decision](#) in Michigan, the Human Resources corollary to this might be “Nice Guys End Up in Court.”

Karl Sicuso, age 60, was hired as a cook and kitchen worker at the Carrington Golf Club. When he was fired just two months later, Sicuso met with the owner, Gary Jonas, to find out more about why he was let go.

Nice Isn't Always Nice

Sicuso secretly taped the entire conversation and it did not go well for Jonas. He spent the majority of the meeting explaining to Sicuso that he just did not fit in with the other staff members. Some of the more noteworthy exchanges were as follows:

Jonas: When you first came here, before we even hired you, I said that the problem is it's a young bunch of people and you're an older guy. Sometimes that don't work.

Sicuso: So basically, the age...

Jonas: It's a generational difference

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Sicuso: So you think its probably the age difference

Jonas: I think that's probably a big part of it, from day one.

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Sicuso: Because of the young kids, it's hard for older people to click together. They don't like to see older people maybe in there or something.

Jonas: Yeah. Plus, I think, innately, younger people want to respect older people. They want to. They're not any good at it, but they want to respect them. Then they have a person come in there and they feel like, well, I gotta respect this person. I can't be myself with this person. And I think that where the — it's not a big deal, but if that chemistry ain't right as a group, I got a problem.

Jonas later explained that he was just trying to let Sicuso down easy and make him feel better about getting fired. Not surprisingly, the attempt at a soft landing just landed Jonas in court as Sicuso filed a lawsuit alleging age discrimination. The judge rejected the employer's motion to dismiss the case and the matter is headed for a jury trial.

Bottom Line

While Jonas's heart was in the right place, his brain should have gotten there first. It is never easy to get fired and there is little that an employer can do to change that reality. Instead of looking for false reasons to cushion the blow, an employer can show true kindness by being respectful toward to the employee while offering direct and truthful communication about the termination decision.

After all, will an employee really feel better about getting fired by hearing that the decision is based on a legally protected characteristic?