

**It's a Great Time to Shed Rude Workers**  
**By Michael "Dr. Woody" Woodward**

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Mimi Whitefield's editor's note on June 6<sup>th</sup> illustrated a not-so-uncommon Miami experience. She highlighted her and her daughter's frustrating experiences with customer service in South Florida. I believe her frustrations also highlight an opportunity that many South Florida businesses may be missing – the opportunity to get rid of rude workers.

I love Miami dearly and decided to make Miami-Dade County my home six years ago. In making that decision, I accepted I would be dealing with a somewhat customer service-challenged environment. Anyone who has dined in South Beach or patronized one of our many local boutiques, knows what I mean. As Whitefield mentioned, there is an entitlement attitude that seems to be prevalent in our service sector.

**Huge Opportunity**

As managers and business owners you now have an opportunity to change that. Over the past couple of months, I have spoken at a number of job fairs and employment networking events only to find highly qualified and motivated South Floridians out of work and desperate for opportunity. With so many great people struggling to find jobs, why do bosses tolerate bad employees?

For those of you in the service industry with management responsibility, take a moment and consider the opportunity you have been presented with. May unemployment was 9.4% in Miami-Dade County, which means that many competitors have laid off good people that are waiting to get snapped up at bargain prices.

So, why are you holding onto dead weight? Consider developing a trade-up strategy to gain a competitive edge in an environment where talent is cheap. Look at going after individuals that may even be a bit overqualified.

**Being Flexible**

For these folks you may want to re-create the job by giving them a little more authority. Examine options that may not cost a lot to you, but could be of value to someone in need. Even if their tenure is only short their positive impact may be long lasting.

An executive client once told me never to be afraid to replace anyone who hurts your business. Sending the right message to your customers now will be critical in retaining them when the economy turns around. Keep in mind, you are a business, not a welfare provider. The last thing you want is customers walking away because one of your employee's is too busy chatting on his cell phone or texting friends. If they don't care about your business, why should you care about them? At the end of the day you want to lure customers not deter them.

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