

Naughty or Nice?



This is the time of year when children everywhere start to wonder which list bears their name. Have I been naughty or nice?

Doesn't it make you wonder exactly how those elves make their determination? Think about it. Little Johnnie could have been the model of good behavior, until that day he got hold of one too many boxes of Hostess Twinkies and took off on a riotous tear through his house. Picture him in the throes of a sugar-induced fit: Coloring on walls, breaking crayons, and generally wreaking havoc with the art supplies. Did that one fit of bad behavior earn him a spot on this year's naughty list?

If the elves make their list decisions like many employers evaluate their staff, Johnnie's fate will depend to great degree on the timing of his outburst.

If Johnnie fell off the Twinkie wagon at the beginning of the year and managed to be a model of angelic behavior the rest of the year, his one infraction might well be forgotten by the time of the annual list (or yearend review.) But, if his untoward episode occurred in November or closer to the end of the year, the action will be fresh in the list maker's mind, which means his chances of making the nice list are slim. The reviewer will likely remember only Johnnie's most recent behavior while all of his good, earlier behavior, will be a distant memory.

Hopefully those Elves have a better system than just an annual review.

I'm sure they have a color-coded spreadsheet tracking each child's behavior over the course of the year, using Excel's conditional formatting to indicate the naughty activities (in red) versus the nice ones (in green). Surely they apply a weighted average against the various childhood activities so that in the end, it all works out fairly and equitably.

| Naughty or Nice? | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|------------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|---------|
| Year Ended December 31, 2009 | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec | List |
| <i>Johnnie</i> | 😊 | 😞 | 😊 | 😊 | 😊 | 😊 | 😊 | 😊 | 😊 | 😊 | 😊 | 😊 | Nice |
| <i>Kathy</i> | 😊 | 😞 | 😊 | 😊 | 😊 | 😊 | 😊 | 😊 | 😊 | 😊 | 😊 | 😊 | Nice |
| <i>Kirsten</i> | 😊 | 😊 | 😊 | 😊 | 😞 | 😊 | 😊 | 😊 | 😊 | 😊 | 😊 | 😊 | Nice |
| <i>Sara</i> | 😊 | 😊 | 😊 | 😊 | 😊 | 😊 | 😊 | 😊 | 😊 | 😊 | 😊 | 😊 | Nice |
| <i>Sallie May</i> | 😊 | 😊 | 😊 | 😊 | 😊 | 😊 | 😞 | 😊 | 😊 | 😞 | 😞 | 😞 | Naughty |
| <i>Katrina</i> | 😊 | 😊 | 😊 | 😊 | 😊 | 😊 | 😊 | 😊 | 😊 | 😊 | 😊 | 😊 | Nice |
| <i>Bill</i> | 😊 | 😊 | 😊 | 😊 | 😊 | 😊 | 😊 | 😊 | 😊 | 😊 | 😊 | 😊 | Nice |
| <i>Bob</i> | 😊 | 😊 | 😊 | 😊 | 😊 | 😊 | 😊 | 😊 | 😊 | 😊 | 😊 | 😊 | Nice |
| <i>Jae</i> | 😊 | 😊 | 😊 | 😊 | 😊 | 😊 | 😊 | 😊 | 😊 | 😊 | 😊 | 😊 | Nice |
| <i>Joshua</i> | 😊 | 😊 | 😊 | 😊 | 😊 | 😊 | 😊 | 😊 | 😊 | 😊 | 😊 | 😊 | Nice |
| <i>Kimberly</i> | 😊 | 😊 | 😊 | 😊 | 😊 | 😊 | 😊 | 😊 | 😊 | 😊 | 😊 | 😊 | Nice |
| <i>Latisha</i> | 😊 | 😊 | 😊 | 😞 | 😊 | 😊 | 😊 | 😊 | 😊 | 😊 | 😊 | 😊 | Nice |
| <i>Samatha</i> | 😊 | 😊 | 😊 | 😊 | 😊 | 😊 | 😊 | 😊 | 😊 | 😊 | 😊 | 😊 | Nice |
| <i>Luanda</i> | 😊 | 😊 | 😊 | 😊 | 😊 | 😊 | 😊 | 😊 | 😊 | 😊 | 😊 | 😊 | Nice |

But wouldn't it be nice if they provided feedback during the year so little Johnnie had a chance to make it all right?

We can learn something from this annual elfin evaluation process. As employers, we need to be sure that we consider our employees' actions all year, that we provide regular feedback (more often than once a year), and that we give our employees ample learning opportunities all year.