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By *Stella Kochen Susskind*, Founder & CEO - [Shop&Test](#)

Kindness and the Power of Invisible Gestures

Every year on November 13, the world celebrates World Kindness Day — a date that might seem symbolic, but in truth, it's a quiet revolution. In a time marked by speed, algorithms, and performance metrics, kindness has become an act of courage.

This year, more than ever, the date invites us to pause and reflect on a simple question: how are we treating one another — as consumers, as colleagues, as human beings?

A global movement with a Brazilian soul

The World Kindness Movement, founded in Tokyo in 1996, created this international day now celebrated in more than 30 countries. The mission is straightforward and deeply human: to inspire spontaneous acts of care and compassion, expecting nothing in return.

In Brazil, kindness found its most poetic voice through José Datrino, known as Profeta Gentileza — “the Prophet of Kindness.” During the 1980s and 1990s, he filled the concrete pillars of Rio de Janeiro with messages urging empathy and humanity. His famous phrase, “Gentileza gera gentileza” (“Kindness generates kindness”), remains a cultural symbol of hope in chaotic times.

As someone who has spent nearly four decades observing human behavior through Mystery Shopping, I see daily how kindness — even in its simplest form — has measurable impact. While most companies chase efficiency and automation, genuine courtesy remains the most powerful differentiator in customer experience.

What kindness reveals in real interactions

I still remember a mystery visit at a retail store in São Paulo. After answering my questions, the salesperson added something unexpected:

“Would you like me to help you compare the options so you choose what really fits your needs?”

That was not in the script — and that's why it mattered.

In another case, during a coffee shop evaluation, a waiter noticed my phone vibrating on the table and quietly said:

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“You can take your call, no problem. I’ll come back in a moment.”

That’s empathy in motion — a delicate, almost invisible act of respect.

In my work, I’ve learned that kindness is emotional intelligence made visible. It transforms a service interaction into a human connection. Metrics such as waiting time or adherence to protocol are important, but they never tell the full story. What truly defines excellence is whether the customer feels seen, heard, and valued.

Kindness backed by data

Science confirms what intuition already knows. A study by the UK Mental Health Foundation found that 63% of people reported improved well-being when practicing or receiving acts of kindness. Another survey cited by The Guardian revealed that the so-called “benevolence bump” — the surge of altruism observed during the pandemic — has persisted, with levels of kindness still 10% higher than pre-2020.

Far from being soft or naïve, kindness is a form of resilience. It lowers stress, enhances collaboration, and fosters trust — all essential components of a sustainable customer-centric culture.

Measuring the immeasurable

In business, the conversation around customer experience often revolves around speed, accuracy, and efficiency. Yet, the most memorable moments rarely come from technical precision — they come from the feeling of care.

That’s why I advocate for including empathy-based criteria in Mystery Shopping evaluations:

- Did the customer feel genuinely welcomed?
- Was there personalized attention beyond the standard script?
- Did the employee display spontaneous kindness?

These questions are not sentimental — they are strategic. Kindness is the invisible KPI that strengthens loyalty and shapes brand perception long after a transaction ends.

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A call for the future

World Kindness Day is not just a celebration; it's a reminder that kindness is a long-term strategy. Companies that nurture kind cultures see better engagement, higher trust, and longer-lasting relationships.

The challenge today is not to teach kindness — it's to remember it. To say “good morning” with intention. To thank with sincerity. To listen without interruption. To value the human being behind every interaction.

As the first entrepreneur to bring Mystery Shopping to Latin America, I've witnessed countless technological shifts. Yet one truth remains unchanged: no AI, automation, or chatbot can replicate the warmth of genuine kindness.

Because, as our Brazilian Prophet of Kindness once said,
Kindness generates kindness — in business, in service, and in life.
