

# Small Business Support Squad: A Village and a Vengeance

In pursuit of her passion, an entrepreneur finds a partner to help her reach her full potential



A budding entrepreneur needs to have the courage to defend their vision. Catherine Mattice, founder of Civility Partners, a San Diego-based HR consulting firm that provides programs to combat workplace bullying, has been indefatigably loyal to her vision from the very start. “People would say, ‘Workplace bullying? That’s not a real thing,’” recalls Catherine. “But I had studied workplace bullying in graduate school, and I knew there were 30 years of academic research on the topic. This enabled me to stick to my guns.”

It was the nonbelievers who made Catherine even more aware of a definite void in the HR landscape—and it would be her duty to fill it. Her husband and fellow HR professional, Nick Zundel, who Catherine credits for empowering her to take her business to the next level, would be there to

bolster her courage along the way, warding off both the negativity and the naysayers, and driving her harder toward her goals.

“There is real value in what Civility Partners brings to the world of HR consulting,” Nick says. “The only way for a business to thrive is for employees to feel happy and excited about going to work. ... There’s not many companies that sell a feel-good product. Workplace bullying sounds like a negative thing, but it [has created] a feel-good product in the end.”

Catherine’s vision for Civility Partners started to gel while serving as HR director at a company where, despite complaints, management turned a blind eye to a bully’s behavior. At the time, Catherine was working on her master’s degree in Human Resources and used the bully as a case study. Catherine launched the website [noworkplacebullies.com](http://noworkplacebullies.com), which evolved into Civility Partners in 2007.

In 2011, four years into Civility Partners, Catherine met Nick, who would ultimately give her the courage to move away from a part-time professor role she was juggling along with running her business, and lean into the decisions that would propel her forward. She hired a business coach, a choice Nick cosigned, that helped her expand her business knowledge base and build greater confidence. “Nick pushes me to think more like a business owner, and less like a solopreneur,” says Catherine. “I’m not a freelancer—I’m an entrepreneur with a business.”

Today, Civility Partners has consulted for an array of major clients and corporations. In addition to the success of her business, Catherine has helped found the National Workplace Bullying Coalition, speaks regularly at the Society for Human Resources and Professionals, and co-authored the book *Back Off! Your Kick A\$\$ Guide to Ending Bullying at Work*.

“There’s the saying, ‘It takes a village to raise a child,’” says Nick. “Well, a business, especially a new business, is a child. And it’s a lot easier if you have a partner or support network that’s helping you along with it.”

Catherine has also relied on other support systems while building Civility Partners. Hiscox Small Business Insurance provides her with **Liability Insurance**. “I’m focused on giving good advice to my clients, but it’s nice to know [Hiscox] is there if anything ever happens.”

Looking ahead, Catherine has plans to continue expanding the business and hopes to grow her team to include a role for Nick, her most supportive ally.

There’s no doubt she’ll get there.

“When she knows what the goal line is, she’s ready to do anything to get it done, and she really drives forward toward it,” says Nick. “That’s how she runs the business, and I admire that.”

“I do go after things with a vengeance,” Catherine says. “That’s who I am.”