

Civility in the Workplace

Iowa State University Extension Office Assistants' Development Conference

October 4, 2007

Session objectives

- Promote an awareness of the need for and benefit of enhanced civility in the workplace, both for the individual as well as for the organization.
- Recognize that some of the things you do or don't do could be handled more civilly.
- Realize that civility improves communications and relationships both within the organization and with outside clients. Victims of incivility in the workplace may inadvertently take out their frustrations on clients which means customer service is impacted and respect for the organization wanes.

True civility is a virtue. It allows us to be master of ourselves, because it demands an assiduous vigilance over words, gestures, and actions. It is the day-to-day victory that forms good character, a principal element of sociability.

--'Small Manual of Civility for Youth' used in Brazil Catholic high schools in the 1950s and 1960s

Morality and civility regulate social behavior. How we treat others is a reflection of our own character and personality. Humans are social animals that live in social environments which require basic systems of morality and civility to survive.

Civility

Constantly aware of others and weaving restraint, respect and consideration into the very fabric of this awareness. Gracious goodness. An interest in the well-being of our communities and a concern for the health of the planet (to be a good citizen and good neighbor). P.M. Forni, cofounder of the Johns Hopkins Civility Project

Tolerance and respect for others

Putting the common good ahead of personal rivalries or irritations

Civic virtue is the cultivation of habits of personal living that are claimed to be important for the success of the community. The term civility refers to behavior between persons and groups. Wikipedia

The discussion continues on the blog, Civility in the Workplace, www.extension.iastate.edu/mt/civility

Anyone may subscribe by email or feed.

If you have topic requests or resources, suggestions for guest bloggers, please let me know,
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How civility relates to communications and marketing

Civility improves communications and relationships. A more civil workplace produces a better quality of life. When your quality of life is raised, your job performance improves as well as your engagement at work. It creates energy and inspires creativity and productivity. Civility impacts morale, retention rates, productivity and profit in the workplace.

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Ground rules

We'll operate in an atmosphere of trust, of mutual respect to feel safe to express opinions.

1. Turn cell phones off or at maximum, to vibrate; if you must answer, do so outside this room.
2. Discuss ideas and issues, not people.
3. Disagree without being disagreeable.
4. Listen to the person speaking and focus on his or her comments.
5. Speak for yourself, not others.
6. Encourage others to contribute to the discussion.
7. Try to understand the others, as much as you hope they try to understand you.
8. Stay focused on the topic, although we'll meander in various directions.
9. Avoid repetition.

Building civility awareness

What do you think of when you talk about respect? What behavioral characteristics are associated with each letter?

R =

E =

S =

P =

E =

C =

T =

Glossary of terms associated with civility and incivility

Assertiveness

Standing up for your rights and expressing your personal needs, values, concerns and ideas in direct and appropriate ways to prevent others from taking advantage of you

The three essential elements of a good assertion: description of the behavior you find objectionable, how you feel about the behavior and how the behavior affects you.

Bullying

Repeated, health impairing mistreatment comprised of verbal abuse and/or threatening, intimidating conduct and/or work interference

Civil discourse

Recognize others have the right to advocate ideas different from yours. Civility requires that you make an honest and continuing effort to understand the views and reasoning of others and are willing to be persuaded others' ideas are better than yours.

Courage

The state or quality of mind or spirit that enables one to face danger, fear or vicissitudes (chance situations) with self-possession, confidence, and resolution; bravery

Courtesy

Excellence and elegance in bestowing respect and attention, deference and formality, consideration of others

Diversity

Creating a culture where each individual can thrive and contribute to the organization. Diverse ethnic cultures, life styles, life stages, creative persuasions, abilities, religious affiliations and gender

Empathy (and the **Golden Rule**, endorsed by all the great world religions)

Identification with and understanding of another's situation, feelings, and motives; commiseration, compassion

Treat others only in ways that you're willing to be treated in the same exact situation.

Esprit de corps e-spreeduh kawr)

The common spirit existing in the members of a group and inspiring enthusiasm, devotion, and strong regard for the honor of the group; camaraderie

Humility

Unpretentious and modest; someone who does not think that he or she is better or more important than others

Integrity

Discerning what is right and what is wrong; acting on what you have discerned, even at personal cost; saying openly that you are acting on your understanding of right from wrong. The rest of what we think matters very little if we lack essential integrity. Stephen L. Carter, author of '(integrity)'

Mindfulness

A more than 2000-year-old Buddhist method of living fully in the present, observing ourselves, our feeling, others and our surroundings without judging them – 'Wherever You Go, There You Are: Mindfulness Meditation in Everyday Life' by Jon Kabat-zinn

Organizational culture

The set of beliefs, values, attitudes, experiences that represents the unique character of an organization, dictates how effectively people interact with each other and with others outside the organization and provides the context for action in it and by it. It can affect employees' ability or willingness to adapt or perform well.

Respect

To hold in esteem or honor, to show regard or consideration for, to refrain from intruding upon or interfering with, esteem for or a sense of the worth or excellence of a person

Self control

The exertion of one's own will on their personal self -- the behaviors, actions, thought processes

Self esteem

The experience of being capable of meeting life's challenges and being worthy of happiness, confidence in one's ability to think, ability to learn, make appropriate choices and decisions and respond effectively to change. If it is not grounded in reality, it is not self-esteem.

Healthy or high self-esteem is characterized by tolerance and respect for others. Individuals who have self-esteem accept responsibility for their actions, have integrity, take pride in their accomplishments, are self-motivated, willing to take risks, capable of handling criticism, loving and lovable, seek the challenge and stimulation of worthwhile and demanding goals, and take command and control of their lives. They trust their own being to be life affirming, constructive, responsible and trustworthy.

Servant leadership

A practical philosophy which supports people who choose to serve first, and then lead as a way of expanding service to individuals and institutions. Servant-leaders may or may not hold formal leadership positions. Servant-leadership encourages collaboration, trust, foresight, listening and the ethical use of power and empowerment. -- The Robert K. Greenleaf Center for Servant-Leadership

Sexual harassment

The inappropriate sexualization of an otherwise non-sexual relationship; unwelcome or unwanted attention of a sexual nature that causes discomfort, humiliation, offense or distress, and/or interferes with the job.

Although the terms values, morals and ethics are often used interchangeably, society generally attaches a fine distinction among them:

Values -- an individual's accepted standards of right or wrong

Morals -- society's standards of right and wrong, very similar to ethics

Ethics -- a structured system of principles that govern appropriate conduct for a group, including activities such as professional ethics, compassion, commitment, cooperation

---University of Cincinnati

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Areas of work: project management, communications and marketing planning, writing and editing with emphasis on Web writing and editing

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