



Civility in the workplace

Recent research, survey results and numerous books and articles continue to indicate rudeness is becoming a trend in today's workplace.

"Incivility has diminished morale, reduced efficiency and loyalty, and let's not forget the bottom line — profits," said Giovinella Gonthier, author of the book "Rude Awakenings: Overcoming the Civility Crisis in the Workplace." "It's a big problem, and it's permeated the business world."

The Civility in America 2011 online poll of 1,000 adults found 43 percent of Americans say they've experienced incivility at work, and 38 percent believe the workplace is increasingly impolite and disrespectful. A lot more than workplace harmony is at stake when colleagues are rude, according to new research mentioned in the article, "The High Cost of Rudeness in the Workplace," by Courtney Rubin. Rubin also said heated discussions, arguments and snide comments cause people to lose concentration and make mistakes, whether they are on the receiving end of the rudeness or just witnesses to it.

Another appalling statistic, surveys have shown one in 10 U.S. workers witness rudeness on a daily basis. Christine Porath and Christine Pearson, who've been studying incivility in the workplace for over a decade, wrote in the "Harvard Business Review" that 48 percent of employees who are targets of rudeness decrease their work effort, and 66 percent said their performance declined. The researchers surveyed several thousand employees and managers from a

range of U.S. companies.

So, what can we do, as individuals, to keep civility from becoming a casualty in our fast-paced workplace? Well, I believe we can begin the journey by practicing three simple strategies:

1. *Please, thank you and excuse me.* These words are easily found in the dictionary. Unfortunately, they are far less common in workplace interactions. According to Susan B. Wilson, a professional coach, "A few words to show gratitude can put someone in a good mood — or at the very least, can keep someone out of a foul mood. Why not try it?"

2. *Everyday greetings.* Something as simple as greeting people, especially in the morning, can start your day and theirs on a pleasant note. Many of us work in companies that have a large number of employees. However, we also see many of these same people in the hallway every day. It doesn't matter whether or not you've been formally introduced, you can still give a smile or a nod.

3. *Courteous use of mobile devices.* During meetings, do you seethe when colleagues continually check emails, texts or, worse yet, play games? I certainly hope you aren't in that category. Put your device out of sight. If you're expecting a very important or emergency call, let the meeting facilitator know up front. And, of course, courteous use of mobile devices is the consider-

ate strategy to use in any situation.

Following are several general guidelines to keep in mind:

- Call if you're running late for an appointment. Let the party know when to expect you. If he cannot see you at that time, ask to reschedule.
- Avoid the use of profanity. Though language is very subjective, the use of profanity in the workplace is definitely unprofessional.

A key to workplace civility is to allow politeness, courteousness and consideration for others to always prevail!

- If you mess up, clean up. The company break/lunch room is generally a communal area and everyone should do his part in keeping it clean.

- Keep interruptions to a minimum. A rare offense is forgivable, but habitual interruptions can be offensive and problematic. They can give others the idea that your time and thoughts are more important, and you have no interest in listening to what they have to say.

To summarize, a key to workplace civility is to allow politeness, courteousness and consideration for others to always prevail!

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