

Workplace CIVILITY: It Really Matters!

Participant Workbook

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*Civility is not simply a question
of minding your manners;
it is also a critical component
of professional success.*

P.M. Forni

Overview

Workshop Objectives

Participants in this workshop should be able to:

- Assess their own level of workplace civility.
- Understand the definition of incivility.
- Be aware of the range of uncivil behaviors.
- Understand the affect on someone who is subjected to, or has observed incivility.
- Understand the benefits of eliminating uncivil behaviors.
- Know what to do when subjected to a case of uncivil behavior.
- Recognize the importance of leadership around the subject of civility.
- Learn about, and create specific strategies that will eliminate uncivil behaviors from your workplace.

ABOUT THE SUBJECT

Much has been written on the subject of Workplace Civility. It encompasses a myriad of topics that all have common grounding in the behaviours of respect and decency. There are so many uncivil behaviours, and degrees of uncivil behaviour that people are subjected to on a daily basis, and thus it's a complex subject to deal with in a training situation.

Every day millions of people make their way to work, and almost all of them have experienced workplace incivility. About half of us experience it on a monthly basis. A quarter of us quit our jobs because of it. But, almost all of us also believe that we always behave civilly. And, most of us are reluctant to stand up to uncivil behavior directed at us, or on behalf of others.

So what is workplace incivility? It's been defined as low-intensity deviant behaviour with an ambiguous intent to harm. Uncivil behaviours are rude and discourteous, and display a lack of regard for others.

Here are just a few examples:

- Not returning phone calls or responding to emails
- Berating or criticizing people in public
- Setting impossible deadlines
- Being habitually late for meetings
- Engaging in rumors or gossip
- Taking credit for someone else's work
- Withholding information and telling lies
- Belittling people who are different or think differently
- Not acknowledging everyone's strengths and contributions to the team
- Walking past a colleague without any acknowledgement
- Not keeping appointments
- Speaking negatively about co-workers
- Interrupting conversations or meetings
- Embarrassing people
- Undermining someone else's work
- Ignoring others and their opinions
- Using poor table manners
- Taking food or drink from a fridge/lunchroom that is not yours
- Using a cell phone during conversations or meetings
- Needing to be right all the time
- Not listening to others or responding appropriately
- Spending an unreasonable amount of time on personal phone calls
- Using a speakerphone without telling the person you are talking to who else is present
- Having offensive body odor from either poor personal hygiene or over-use of fragrance

Activity 1: Civility Survey Questions

How often in the last month have you experienced rude/uncivil behaviour, or observed it happening to others?

- 1-3 times
- 4-6 times
- 7-9 times
- 10 times or more

Have you stood up to rude/uncivil behaviour directed at you—at the time or confronted it later?

- Never
- Sometimes
- Always

How often have you stood up for a colleague who was the target of rude/uncivil behaviour?

- Never
- Sometimes
- Always

What are the feelings you had after experiencing rude/uncivil behaviours? Check all that apply.

- Anger
- Embarrassment
- Shock
- Disgust
- Fear
- Wanting to quit your job

What are the feelings you had after observing rude/uncivil behaviours? Check all that apply.

- Feeling uncomfortable.
- Anger
- Shock
- Empathy
- Disgust

Civility Experiment

Researchers devised an experiment where one group of participants witnessed rudeness, and another group actually experienced being treated rudely. They were then asked to complete problems solving tasks and creativity tasks.

The group who had been treated rudely found it hard to focus on the task and their performance plummeted. Compared to a group who hadn't been treated rudely, their problem solving ability was 61 per cent worse, and they produced less than half as many ideas in the creativity test.

In the group who just witnessed rudeness to another person, their problem solving was 33 per cent worse, and they came up with 39 per cent fewer creative ideas. The psychologists also found that when people encounter incivility, they are far less inclined to help others. They found that 73 per cent of those who hadn't experienced rudeness would volunteer to help someone, but this fell to only 24 per cent in those who had been treated rudely.

This research is important for organizations because it shows that even witnessing incivility significantly reduces people's ability to think clearly, be creative and help their colleagues. Rudeness and incivility is not just unpleasant, it has a direct and significant impact on performance and productivity.

Workplace Civility Statistics

These findings were also reflected in a recent survey reported in the Harvard Business Review, of how 800 managers and employees, typically reacted to rudeness and incivility in the workplace:

- 48% intentionally decreased their work effort.
- 47% intentionally decreased the time spent at work.
- 38% intentionally decreased the quality of their work.
- 80% lost work time worrying about the incident.
- 63% lost work time avoiding the offender.
- 66% said that their performance declined.
- 78% said that their commitment to the organization declined.
- 22% said that they left their job because of the uncivil treatment.
- 25% admitted to taking their frustration out on customers.

Activity 2: Watch Workplace Civility Video

Activity 3: Vignette Discussions

Janet & Mike Discussion—Lessons Learned

- Public reprimands or criticisms of subordinates are never acceptable.
- Leaders should always set a respectful example for all employees.
- If subjected to uncivil behavior, have a private meeting to discuss it.
- Focus the discussion on the behavior, not the person.
- Be assertive; suggest that you can give your manager what he needs if he shares his requirements in detail.

Other suggestions for Lessons Learned (record below).

Hector and Johnathan Discussion - Lessons Learned

- The team leader should always set a respectful tone and treat each team member fairly.
- If you witness someone talking behind a colleague's back, it's up to you to challenge that behavior.
- In a team environment, share all suggestions with the whole team.
- If you're disrespected or treated unfairly, speak with the person promptly after the incident.
- Remember, that it's never okay to take credit for someone else's work.

Other suggestions for Lessons Learned (record below).

Haya & Sheila Discussion - Lessons Learned

- Nurse supervisors should never disparage a subordinate or colleague in front of a patient. It's distressing for both the nurse and the patient.
- Supervisors must be willing to assist, or arrange for a colleague to provide assistance when requested.
- Confronting disrespectful behavior is crucial to avoiding communication breakdowns that can have consequences for patient safety and care.
- Choose an agreed upon time, and private place to discuss uncivil behaviors.
- In healthcare situations, respectful communication and conflict resolution is key to avoiding patient errors.

Other suggestions for Lessons Learned (record below).

Mary & Angela Discussion - Lessons Learned

- Establish and post a list of ground rules for meetings in your organization.
- Check and mute all cell phones and pagers at the door.
- Start your meetings on time, even if everyone is not there.
- Move forward with agenda items that don't directly involve late arrivals if possible.
- The facilitator should assist the group in dealing with inappropriate interruptions, criticisms, and rudeness.
- Respectfully listen to your colleagues' opinions and input before you judge their validity.
- If there are persistent conflicts between colleagues, they should meet outside of a group format to deal with their issues.

Mary & Angela Discussion - Lessons Learned, continued

Other suggestions for Lessons Learned (record below).

Phil & Jordan Discussion - Lessons Learned

- Select an experienced, successful person to deliver training, based on trainee feedback.
- Everyone acquires new skills differently —flexibility with the training process is needed.
- Losing your temper with a co-worker and being disrespectful is never acceptable—it’s counterproductive.
- If a co-worker is treating you rudely, speak up and let them know that you deserve their respect.
- Always have a supervisor or manager follow up on employee training.

Other suggestions for Lessons Learned (record below).

Activity 4: What are the benefits to changing our behavior?

What are the benefits of eliminating your uncivil behavior?

- Employees who practice civil behavior have higher self-esteem
- Employees who practice civil behavior have higher performance levels
- In turn, when you are respected for behaving civilly, it reinforces your behavior in a positive way
- You are more likely to be praised by your co-workers and managers for being respectful
- If you're a manager or supervisor your employees are more inclined to be loyal and work harder for you
- Your relationships with both internal and external clients will improve
- Contrary to what some believe, being nice does pay off with more promotions and raises

Other suggestions for the benefits of eliminating uncivil behavior (record below).

Activity 5: Sensory acuity exercise

If we work with someone, we need to develop rapport with them. When two people are connected, their subconscious minds tell them that the other person is just like them. In each encounter with someone else we give subtle clues and cues that tell the other person how we are feeling, how our thinking has changed, and whether we are accepting or dismissive of them.

Despite the large amount of literature on body language, you cannot always take a single gesture and derive universal meaning from it. So, for example, body language books will tell you that folded arms and crossed legs indicate that someone is resisting what you are saying. In reality, it may simply be comfortable for someone to sit that way! However, people are generally highly consistent in their own use of gesture. Some of those gestures are very subtle—a change in muscle tone around the eyes or jaw, a slight change in colour of the cheeks, a slight dilation or contraction of the pupils. ***There is no right or wrong—just consistency within individuals.***

Through the ability to recognize these subtle signs, you can start to know intuitively the right time to expect a 'yes' in negotiations, the time to approach or retreat, the time to expect a warm or cold reception. This aids in developing rapport, communicating respectfully, and being open to work toward a compromise on contentious issues. Non-verbal language is powerful but just like verbal language, it must be learned.

What's it for?

To help employees develop new skills in identifying the subtle mental or emotional changes in others during communications. These signal the need for flexibility in communication. In other words, it's a gauge that will tell you to adjust your communication style.

How To Play.

- Players work in pairs, **A** and **B**.
- Pairs sit facing each other.
- **A** gets up from their chair and moves left and back again five times in a row. **A** sits down.
- **A** then gets up and moves right five times in a row.
- **B** observes.
- Then **A** gets up and randomly goes left or right.
- As **A** starts to get up, **B** guesses at the direction in which **A** is going to move.
- After **B** has given three correct answers, reverse the roles.

These are the main discussions for creating incivility solutions that will be dealt with in this workshop:

- What can your organization's Management Team do to promote workplace civility?
- How can you tell someone that they are behaving uncivilly?
- What are the costs of workplace incivility?
- How can you build a civil workplace?
- Rewarding civil behavior.

What can your organization's Management Team do to promote workplace civility?

- Mandate that a workplace Civility Policy be created with clear expectations and input from all stakeholders.
- Develop a formal procedure so that employees can report uncivil behaviors and make it simple to use. This is especially valuable if the transgressor is a manager or supervisor of the complainant.
- Ensure that HR and all hiring personnel include the disclosure of the organization's Civility Policy and when checking references look for indications of past inappropriate behavior.
- Offer Assertiveness and Conflict Management programs for all employees.
- Model the types of behavior expected of all employees.
- Treat everyone with respect.
- Don't play favourites or showing bias with employees.
- Offer praise for a job well done—in public.
- Don't over react to errors made by employees—take the time to educate.
- Give constructive criticism in private—help instil confidence.
- Avoid being autocratic.

How can you tell someone that they are behaving uncivilly?

The difficulty in dealing with incivility is that because we are addressing a problem, our behaviour when tackling the person who is causing it, is likely to be either nonassertive or aggressive.

If we are to get others to change their behaviour, we need to approach them in a calm and controlled manner and explain ourselves in a way that minimizes the risk of their becoming defensive. This self-control helps avoid escalating the situation, and helps us stick to the point, rather than bringing in past problems which cloud the issue and can then lead to a full-scale argument.

A simple model is The Four 'I's

Introduce

- Be specific and simple (*When you stare out of the window while I'm talking...*).
- Describe the person's actions, not their motives or intentions (**not** *When you try to put me off by staring out of the window while I'm talking...*).
- Try to avoid accusing, 'you', statements (*When you talk over me at meetings... not You always talk over me at meetings*).

Impact (the effect it has on you)

- Acknowledge and take responsibility for your feelings (*I feel... not You make me feel...*).
- Be calm and specific (*I feel angry/humiliated/embarrassed*).

Inform (tell the person the changes you would like made)

- Be clear and direct.
- Be realistic.
- Leave room for negotiation (*How do you feel about this...?*).
- Recognize that the other person has feelings (*I understand that you...*).

Incentive (what's in it for them if they agree)

- Ensure they will see it as a benefit.
- Offer something that you know you can deliver.

What are the costs of workplace incivility?

- High employee turnover—increased recruitment costs
- Increased legal costs to settle workplace lawsuits
- Increased healthcare costs
- High absenteeism rates—less work done translates into a productivity drain
- High rates of stress that affects employees at work and home
- Less confidence in management
- Customer complaints, loss of credibility, and loss of business
- Creativity suffers and that affects growth and competitiveness
- Decrease in effectiveness and productivity of teams
- Loss of commitment to the organization

Other suggestions for the costs of workplace incivility (record below).

How can we build a civil workplace?

- Require every employee to commit to behaving civilly.
- Be willing to intervene in extreme uncivil situations—it usually stops the behavior.
- Be respectful of all co-workers, supervisors and managers.
- Be, or become a good listener.
- Use a calm tone of voice when speaking—people will actually listen to you more.
- Endeavour to leave your home problems at home.
- Remember that not everyone is right or wrong all of the time.
- Make an effort to get to know your co-workers—show interest in them.
- Use good manners—please and thank you goes a long way.
- Recognize the contributions your co-workers make to your job.
- Avoid using email for difficult issues and discussions.
- Don't be late for meetings or deadlines—apologize if unavoidable.
- Welcome feedback from your colleagues on your behavior.
- Take 60 seconds before hitting reply on a contentious email.
- Say good morning and good night to your co-workers.
- Don't gossip or spread rumours.
- Be kind, and don't forget to smile.

Other suggestions on how to build a civil workplace (record below).

Rewarding Civil Behavior

Punishment is not typically a long-term solution for uncivil behaviour. Many advocate for a reward system to combat unwanted behaviors. This doesn't mean that anyone should have to tolerate uncivil behavior directed toward themselves or others. It just means that rewarding and making publicly observed/experienced civil behavior is a much stronger vehicle for promoting a positive culture in your organization.

Every time you or your colleagues observe or experience those positive behaviors make sure that you acknowledge it with the other person. Here's an example: You pass on a report to a co-worker that unknowingly has an error in it. The recipient catches it and meets with you to let you know about it so it can be corrected. Your co-worker could chastise you for giving them erroneous information, or they could say something like, "I found an error in the report that you gave me. It's an easy mistake to make, especially with all the variables that we're using. No worries. Would you like me to make the change and send you a copy, or would you like to make the change yourself and forward me the revised copy?"

You can then say, "Thanks for understanding. It's been a little crazy here for the past week, and I guess I lost my concentration for a minute and transposed those numbers. I appreciate you letting me know about this. I'll correct it right away and send you the revision".

Suggestions on how to reward civil behavior (record below).

Here are some examples of Civility Mottos.

- Be A Civility Super Hero
- Civility: Communicate With Kindness
- Civility: Communicate With Respect
- Show Your Civility
- Wear Your Civility
- We Are All About Civility

Can you come up with more—relevant to your organization? (Record below.)

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Civility Quotes To Ponder

- Three things in human life are important: The first is to be kind. The second is to be kind. And the third is to be kind. — *Henry James*
- There are two fundamental abilities to cultivate in order to be agreeable in conversation: The ability to consider that you might be wrong and the ability to admit that you don't know. — *P.M Forni*
- Politeness and civility are the best capital ever invested in business. — *P.T Barnum*
- The civility which money will purchase is rarely extended to those who have none. — *Charles Dickens*
- Every action done in company ought to be with some sign of respect to those that are present. — *George Washington*
- Politeness is the art of choosing among your thoughts. — *Madame De Stael*
- Civility isn't just some optional value in a multicultural, multistate democratic republic. Civility is the key to civilization. — *Van Jones*
- Be civil to all; serviceable to many; familiar with few; friend to one; enemy to none. — *Benjamin Franklin*

Resources

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