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*OEO*News

"Committed to promoting a working and learning environment free of discrimination..."
Kim D. Kirkland, Ed.D., Director

In a Civil Workplace: Professional Conduct

Second in a three-part series

"...civility requires respect and...careful balancing of differing points of view." ~ *IUPUI Civility Statement*

Scroll through OEO's annual report, specifically top-cited reasons for separation, and one discovers that workplace civility impacts employee turnover as "inter-personal work environment" and "conflict with coworkers" are consistent top reasons cited for separation. It seems that manners matter at IUPUI.

"Who cares?" you ask. Well, perhaps we all should, and not just for the reputation of being "nice". Civility bears a huge financial and, in some cases, legal impact affecting the University's budget.

Consider a study by Christine Porath and Christine Pearson published in the Harvard Business Review. "The tab for [workplace] incivility can run into the millions,"

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says the report and "just one habitually offensive employee critically positioned in your organization can cost you dearly in lost employees, lost customers, and lost productivity." In an environment of competing priorities, can IUPUI constituents afford not to be civil?

"All this talk about civility is interfering with my constitutional right to yell at my co-workers."

When an employee is frustrated, work product suffers. Time is wasted in sidebar conversations and closed-door "vent" sessions. Incivility, rudeness and bad manners can undermine team spirit, reduce organizational commitment and lead to unnecessary sick days and employee turnover.

Chronic bad behavior often morphs into court pleadings and several universities have been named defendants in recent lawsuits resulting in exorbitant lawyer fees, damages, and bad publicity. For example, Harvard's first female spinal surgeon was awarded $1.6

Are you civil? Take our quiz.

Answer yes or no to the following questions. Do you:

1. Arrive consistently late?
2. Check your phone during meetings?
3. Talk about others or gossip?
4. Convey strong odor (cologne, cooking, smoking, etc.)?
5. Whistle, hum, sing, tap, click or make other chronic noise?
6. Clip or file your nails, blow your nose, brush hair, make clothing adjustments or walk barefoot in the office?
7. Take the last cup of coffee and not make more?
8. Avoid doing your work?
9. Consistently interrupt, complain or intrude on personal space?
10. Micromanage or make others feel marginalized?

(See answers on back.)

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million in damages due to a hostile work environment that included being told to "get up on the table to dance so you could show [guests] how to behave" and finding a blow-up doll with a picture of her face attached to it. Experts seem to agree that it's in an organization's best interest to nip uncivil behavior in the bud.

But why?

Each IUPUI employee is required to complete harassment prevention training, the library and internet is filled will books about civility. So why, when so much information is available, is civility still an issue? There may be several reasons.

OEO Director Kim D. Kirkland, Ed.D., author of Enough With The Stuff (Something That U Find Frustrating says it's "unreasonable to expect us to live in a society where there are legitimate gender and cultural differences and expect those differences not to collide…"

The Porath study also says that leadership roles often go to those with technical or financial expertise but lack emotional intelligence or leadership skills. For example the University of Texas Medical School hired the ex-Harvard neurosurgeon who brought about Harvard's suit.

"People who behave badly are given tacit permission to do so as long as they produce results," writes Porath. This model sets in motion the "tension-filled work environment that…sucks the soul from employees who would otherwise go above and beyond."

A third reason, according to the Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology is that "a distinguishing feature of incivility is its ambiguity." In other words, people may not recognize their behavior as bad.

Change, Communicate, Forgive

At an early age, most are taught basic manners – use an appropriate greeting, say "please," "thank you" and "excuse me. Don't chew with your mouth open, clean up after yourself, don't interrupt, speak in a respectful tone and so on. When examining our personal behavior are we routinely engaging simple courtesy and respect?

Leadership can help change the organizational culture. Porath suggests that managers model good behavior, teach civility, reward good behavior, penalize rudeness and look for civility when hiring. She says that "incivility usually leaves a trail of some sort, which can be uncovered if someone's willing to look."

Dr. Kirkland recommends communicating about frustrating behavior before those behaviors fester into a full-blown scrimmage. "…if someone brings an issue to you, address it," she writes. "If someone admits to engaging in inappropriate behavior, address it. If you observe inappropriate behavior, address it."

She also proposes pardoning when appropriate. "Allow supervisors and managers to err on the side of poor judgement," she writes. And by addressing the issues, forgiving mistakes, and moving on perhaps the frustrations don't have to lead to exit interviews or worse.

Sources:
http://www.washingtonpost.com/business/capitalbusiness/career-coach-how-to-cultivate-civility-in-the-workplace/2012/06/15/gJQA6YIjjV_story.html
The Price of Incivility by Christine Porath and Christine Pearson, https://hbr.org/2013/01/the-price-of-incivility/
Enough With The Stuff (Something That U Find Frustrating) Strategies for Defusing Organizational Noise, Kim D. Kirkland, Ed.D., Outskirts Press, ©2015

Answers: Are you civil?

"Yes" to any question? Take a closer look:

1. Be cordial, polite and timely.

2. Avoid personal calls, texts, or email during business and never look at electronic devices while speaking with others.

3. Never spread rumors or gossip.

4. Refrain from using strong cologne or air scents, or warming pungent food during work hours.

5. Be mindful that chronic noise such as whistling, foot tapping and keyboard pounding can be annoying to those around you.

6. Respect good health for those around you. Tend to personal hygiene privately, stay home when sick, and keep shoes on at all times.

7. Clean up after yourself, replace supplies, make more coffee.

8. Work to your full potential.

9. Knock before entering and respect colleagues' time.

10. Exercise transparency, communicate and collaborate. Listen. Ask questions. Follow up. Respect and embrace cultural difference. Treat others as you would like to be treated.

Quiz compiled from: Toward a More Civil Work Place Avoiding Offensive Behavior at Work by D. Rosenberg McKay at:
http://careerplanning.about.com/od/bosscoworkers/a/respect.htm and
http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2015/06/21/opinion/sunday/incivility-at-work-quiz.html

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