Civility: Loss Control Measures You Can Replicate

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Great News!

At this time in history, the municipal workplace is more diverse than ever before!

WHAT IS WORKPLACE CIVILITY?

Workplace Civility is:

- The respectful and courteous behavior that employees exhibit towards their colleagues.

- Civility is the act of showing regard for others by being polite.

What Does Workplace Incivility Look Like?

An employee who takes credit for the work performed by other employees.

An employee that always assumes the worst in others and spreads discontent among peers.

A manager that does not communicate with staff members.

An employee that repeatedly shows up late for meetings.

An employee that interrupts or silences others while they are speaking.

A supervisor that excessively monitors (micromanages) staff.

Gossip. Profanity. Silent Treatment. Rudeness. . .

The Cost of Incivility

SHRM's latest civility index released on August 7, 2024, indicates that U.S. organizations collectively lose **$1.2 billion** per day in reduced productivity due to incivility in the workplace and **$828 million** per day in absenteeism caused by incivility. That is over **$2 BILLION PER DAY!**

Prevalence of Incivility

SHRM's civility research shows that nearly three-quarters of U.S. workers (74%) have personally experienced or witnessed incivility in the past month. Of the workers polled, 13% said they personally experienced or witnessed incivility daily, 49% said weekly, and 38% said monthly.
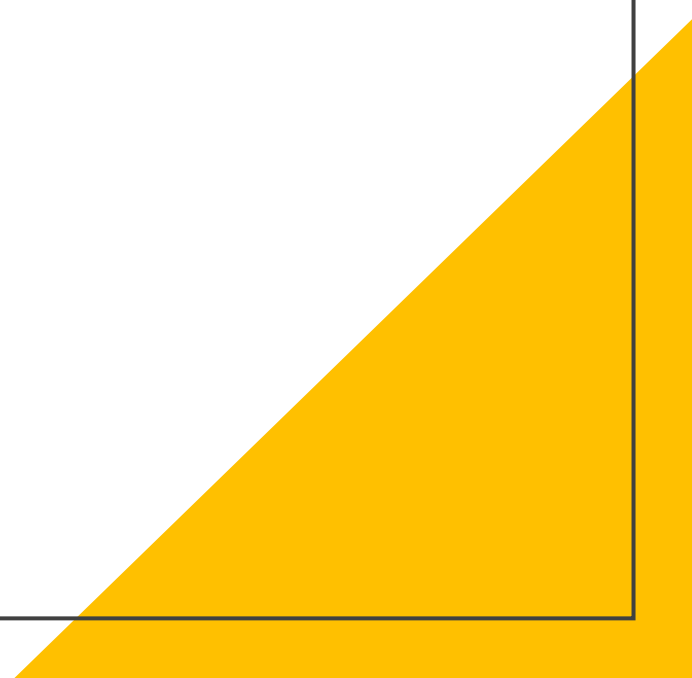
The Impact of Incivility in the Workplace

- Poor employee morale.

- Higher stress levels.

- Lower productivity.

- It creates toxic workplaces.

- Increased turnover.

- Lower employee commitment to the organization.

- Higher rates of bullying and harassment.

- Can lead to potential litigation if it rises to the level of misconduct.

What Can An Organization Do?

Creating a Culture of Workplace Civility

- Ensure that leaders support and model civility.

- Establish a code of conduct.

- Clearly define expectations.

- Educate employees.

- Never miss an opportunity to communicate.

- Hire for civility.

- Enforce a zero-tolerance policy.

- Recognize and reward employees who model civility.

Civility Starts At The Top

- You cannot create a culture of civility in any organization, without leadership modeling the behavior.
  - Communicate your vision clearly.
  - Train your leadership – directors, managers, supervisors, team leaders, etc.
  - Include leaders in decisions and gain buy-in by having leadership assist in developing a code of civility.
  - Hold leaders accountable.

Are you modeling civil behavior?

What do you do when you fail?

Creating A Civil Workplace Depends On You Too!

You mean I have to be civil???!!

WE ALL HAVE OUR MOMENTS

Labels

- 90% of who we are as an individual, others cannot see.

- But we label, categorize, and make judgements about people based on the 10% we can see.

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Bias

We ALL have biases
- Unconscious bias
- Conscious bias

Emotional Intelligence

- Slow down and "read the room."
- Know when to speak.
- Never confront anyone when you are angry.
- Be mindful of your own insecurity.
- Know yourself – triggers, bias, fears.
- H-A-L-T
- Be empathetic.
- Adjust your words in accordance with the situation and emotional well-being of others.

Establish a Civility Policy or Code of Conduct

- Define the components of a civil and respectful work environment.

- Allow employees and leadership to participate in the process to garner support and empower employees to hold one another accountable for civil behavior.

- Make certain that the policy includes a statement addressing what happens when incivility occurs.

Code of Civility

1. We greet and acknowledge each other.

2. We say please and thank you.

3. We treat each other equally with respect, no matter the conditions.

4. We acknowledge the impact of our behavior on others.

5. We welcome feedback from each other.

6. We are approachable.

7. We are direct, sensitive, and honest.

8. We acknowledge the contributions of others.

9. We respect each other's time commitments.

10. We address incivility when it occurs.

Include A Civility Statement In All Job Descriptions

CIVILITY AND PROFESSIONALISM
AML is a team-based service organization. Maintenance of good internal morale is essential to the League's success. An employee is required to maintain professional and ethical behavior and act with integrity in all matters. The Arkansas Municipal League is committed to providing a work environment that is free from bullying, harassment, intimidation, abusive language, gossip, employees spreading discontent or exhibiting any behavior that is disruptive to the workplace and contrary to the League's mission.

Other Policies That Support A Civil Workplace

- Conduct Toward League Membership And the Public Policy

- Anti-Harassment Policy

- Anti-Bullying Policy

- Work Habits and Attitudes Policy

Educate Employees

It's not enough to define civility. You must teach employees to understand and respect each other.

- Equip your employees to succeed by teaching them basic skills such as active listening, maintaining composure in difficult situations, providing feedback in a positive manner, and accepting constructive criticism.

- Great training resources include:
  - Employee Assistance Programs
  - EEOC Training Institute https://eeoc.gov
  - Institute for Civility https://www.instituteforcivility.org
  - Society of Human Resources Management https://shrm.org
  - Human Resources Certification Institute https://hrci.org

Never Miss An Opportunity To Communicate

- Talk to your employees about civility. If you are having trouble starting the conversation, SHRM has an excellent resource, "Cards Against Incivility" that can be found at https://shrm.org/civility. The concept is founded on the idea that better workplaces and a better world can start with one civil conversation. The cards are designed to be conversation starters and provide thought provoking questions to discuss. Try them during your next employee engagement luncheon.

- Make sure communication with employees is honest and transparent.

- Be open to constructive discussions.

Hire For Civility

- Conduct group interviews so that employees can evaluate potential teammates.

- Check references and follow up on hunches with referees and other contacts. Did the applicant that looks great on paper leave a trail of destruction in the wake of their last job?

- Incorporate behavioral questions regarding civility into the job interview.
  - Tell me about a time when you responded to a co-worker who made an insensitive remark. Describe your actions and the outcome.
  - What would you do if you witnessed an employee being berated by another employee?
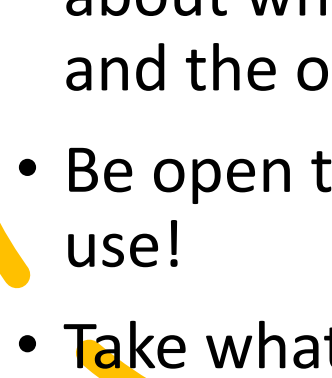
Hold Employees Accountable

- Do not ignore or make excuses for uncivil behavior.

- If two employees are having a disagreement, bring them together to discuss the problem, making sure both employees understand that their current behavior is unprofessional and unacceptable.

- Take advantage of the resources offered by your Employee Assistance Program. Most EAPs provide a Supervisory Referral for mandatory coaching.

- Be direct and honest with employees, clearly defining expectations. If the employee does not comply, follow your disciplinary action policy.

- Train employees to speak up when they witness uncivil behavior.

Use Your Evaluation Process to Promote Civility

Performance evaluations are the perfect tool for checking the pulse of your organization and learning what motivates your employees.

- Consider having employees complete a self-evaluation as part of the evaluation process.

- Use the evaluation to have in-depth conversations with your employees about what they like and dislike about their department, their position, and the organization.

- Be open to what the employee has to say. Put that "active listening" skill to use!

- Take what you've learned and create a strategy for improvement.

Recognize And Reward Employees Who Model Civility

When employees feel appreciated, they become engaged with their work and promote your organization's mission.

- Managers and supervisors should provide positive feedback regularly, whether via email or in person.

- Acknowledge acts of civility in a company newsletter.

- Create a "board" where employees can recognize their peers for their kindness and civility.

- Recognize an "Employee of the Month" and include civility in the criteria.

Other Recognition Ideas

- Hold employee appreciation lunches for your entire staff to say thank you and let employees know they are valued.

- Host a company outing, such as a picnic or baseball game.

- Host a company-sponsored volunteer day where employees can volunteer for a day at an animal shelter or food bank.

- Handwritten notes to employees thanking them for their efforts is a thoughtful way to relay gratitude.

- Thank you treats – who doesn't love cookies?

- Social media praise.

- Team trophy.

- Surprise time off.

Conduct Exit Interviews

- Whether written or in person, exit interviews are an opportunity to find out whether your organization is succeeding at creating a culture of civility.

- Don't be afraid to ask employees:

  1. Why are you leaving?

  2. What would you change about your experience?

  3. What do you think needs to be done to create a better work environment?

I would love to hear your ideas to promote and build a culture of civility, professionalism and inclusion!
tpew@arml.org

Resources

- League of Minnesota Cities, *Taking the Lead – How City Officials Can Promote Civility,* by Matt Lehrman – www.lmc.org/news-publications/magazine/may-June-2023/civility/

- SHRM's Civility Starter Kit - www.shrm.org/civility

- Certificates in HR Ethics, Fostering an Inclusive Culture & More – www.learn.hrci.org

- Harassment Prevention and Respectful Workplaces Training – https://www.eeoc.gov

- Harvard Business Review Magazine, *The Price of Incivility,* by Christine Porath and Christine Pearson, January – February 2013

Benefits of Mindfulness

Physical
- Lower blood pressure
- Improved heart health
- Stronger immune response
- Improved sleep

Emotional
- Greater stress resilience
- Improved mood
- Reduced anxiety and depression
- Greater empathy

Mental
- Improved attention
- Greater creativity
- Better memory
- Reduced bias
- Increased grey matter in brain

Behavioral
- Less reactivity
- Greater persistence
- More ethical behavior
- Greater patience

For reviews see Ryan & Creswell (2007), Glomb et al (2011) and Good et al (2016)