ENTERPRISING RURAL FAMILIES

Rudeness in the Workplace

Mary M. Martin
Area Extension Community Development Educator

Experiencing rudeness can ruin one's day.   Research at the University of Florida's Warrington College of Business Administration found that being on the receiving end of rude behavior at work makes people more likely to be rude to others. Their findings provide evidence that everyday impoliteness spreads in the workplace.   Everyone knows that an encounter with a rude individual can trigger negative psychological and/or emotional distractions. The identified adverse consequences of incivility in the workplace included experiencing negative emotions, strained relationships and a loss of productivity. People in this study reported increased levels of stress and worry, regret, surprise, aggravation, embarrassment, humiliation, shame and anger. The study found that the lost time spent dealing with the situation seemed to compound because other co-workers became involved and also expended time trying to help the target cope with the situation (McCarthy).

Employees desire to be treated with respect and professionalism. However, there is evidence which suggests that a "civil" work environment is the exception rather than the norm. What is "incivility?" The Oxford Dictionary defines incivility as "a rude or discourteous act; to act rudely is to be discourteous without regard for others in violation of norms for respect in social interactions." Norms in the workplace, develop over time, and are prescribed through formal and informal organizational polices, rules and procedures.

Typical words used to describe rudeness and incivility include such terms as being crude, inelegant, uncouth, coarse, vulgar, discourteous, unlearned, uncivilized, ignorant, uneducated, and simple. Examples of uncivil and rude behavior in the workplace include a person who purposely does not greet or acknowledge someone at the office; takes someone else's food from a shared refrigerator without permission; starts an e-mail without a salutation; takes the last cup of coffee without making more; stands over a coworker who is on the phone or is typing; does not give credit publicly to a colleague; leaves the copier knowingly jammed and walks away; interrupts a person speaking to

HOW RUDE!

After experiencing rude behavior, people engage in thought processes to try to make sense of the event. Whether they are considering their appropriate response, or trying to "explain away" the rude behavior, or simply ruminating about its fairness, all of these processes take mental resources.

In so doing, rudeness robs some portion of the working memory needed to think clearly and critically for the task at hand.

someone else; shouts at a coworker or superior; arrives late; or wears clothing that is inappropriate for the work environment (Crampton & Hodge).

The field of organizational behavior has long recognized that rude workplace behaviors can precipitate a torrent of conscious and detrimental effects by employees, including retaliation, counterproductive behaviors, and withdrawal of support for leaders.

Whether they recognize or verbally admit to doing so many staff who experience or perceive rude treatment at work find avenues to punish the instigator and organization. In a 2013 contribution to *Harvard Business Review*, Porath and Pearson summarized findings from a poll of 800 managers and staff in 17 different industries (including health care), who identified the following ways in which they reacted to rudeness directed at them:

- 80% lost work time due to worrying about the incident.
- 78% felt diminished commitment to the organization.
- 66% admitted their work performance had declined.
- 63% lost work time avoiding the perpetrator.
- 38% intentionally reduced their work effort.
- 47% intentionally reduced their work time.
- 38% intentionally reduced their work quality.
- 25% took their frustration out on customers.
- 12% left their job as a result of the rude interaction.

Experiments indicate incivility has effects on creativity in the workplace and deterioration of performance and team spirit. Disrespectful behavior makes people uncomfortable and customers are quick to walk away. According to a study conducted by Accountemps and reported in Fortune managers at Fortune 1,000 firms spend the equivalent of seven weeks a year dealing with the aftermath of incivility. That's 13% of their work time! (Porath and Pearson)

What's a manager to do? The costs of incivility chip away at the bottom line.

1. Model civil behavior. Be mindful that how you treat your people can impact the way they treat others. You can prevent rudeness from spreading by setting a good example.   One way to create a culture of respect and bring out your employee's best is to express your appreciation.
2. Don't ignore rude behavior. If you ignore rude behave, you're inadvertently signally that you condone it.   Ask for feedback on your leadership style, and behaviors.
3. When you need to address rudeness, talk to the offender somewhere in private. Stay calm and objective as you outline the facts as you know them, explain the negative impact of this behavior and how it impacted others, and make it clear how you want the behavior modified in the future. Don't disparage nasty colleagues behind their backs, its simple spreading gossip and creating "sides".
4. Listen. The offender may think that he/she had a good reason to be annoyed with somebody, and the rude behavior was an appropriate reaction to them. So, while making it clear that the rude behavior is unacceptable, give the individual an opportunity to explain what trigged it. Listen carefully to help you understand the situation and work together to find a solution.

5. Follow up with any offender. Take the offender's point of view into account, but you have to make it clear that in your enterprise you don't want a repeat of his/her words, or actions.   If as part of your solution, you set targets or standards of behavior, make sure they are achieved.
6. Hire for civility.   Avoid bringing incivility into the workplace in the first place.
7. Teach civility.   People can learn civility on the job, role playing is an effective technique. Businesses can set the behavior standards they desire to be part of their organization's norms.
8. Reward good behavior and penalize bad behavior

References:

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Tip of the Month

Entrepreneurial Principles for Growing Your Business
Mary M Martin, Area Extension Community Development Educator

It takes a combination of understanding the market demand and your market size to having the support in a market for a scalable business.

Your timing is critical. The timing of your product or service must be right for your market. You need leadership which is agile, resilient and willing to fail, and constantly innovation to anticipate your market and your customer's needs. The right product at the right time is key.

Build successful teams. Make sure your most important asset, your team, has the skills, resources, motivation and passion required for reaching success.

Brand Building. Business leaders need to create an emotional attachment that links customers to your product. Create a brand which evokes positive memories for customers.

Who's your target customer? You have to know who your customer is, the surest road to product failure is to try to be all things to all people. You want to become customer-centric. And you want to have a plan for how you need to build and maintain relationships with your customers. Customers are humans, and relationships are key.

You have to make the sales happen. Apart from conceptualizing and designing your products and services, the most important hat you wear as an entrepreneur is that of a sales person. Sales manifest in various forms and doesn't always lead to a financial transaction. Building effective relationships with all levels of customers is essential.

Technology. Whether you are approaching a traditional brick and mortar enterprise or a contemporary technology based one you need mastery of technology principles.