

Generate Change with Workplace Civility

by Terry "TJ" Wisner

As shoppers in the high-end department store strolled by, it was evident the "manager" was giving the sales clerk, direct (and somewhat hostile) feedback. The young lady was left in tears. It looked like a scene from a Career Builder commercial.

Do you think this young lady enjoys coming to work? Is she fully engaged? Will she look for opportunities to excel? Is she proud to work for this company? Would she consider her workplace to be civil? Probably not!

Daily most of us experience what I refer to as a lack of "workplace civility." We either observe it externally or live in it internally.

In my *Leadership-Don't Just Do It!* program, one segment deals with fostering Workplace Civility.

A recent global study was performed by Towers Perrin, a global workforce study organization. It revealed that less than 21% of workers worldwide were engaged in their work. Twenty-One Percent!

The following is a quick review of the five keys to creating a civil, engaged workplace:

Foundational Trust

The organization must have a high level of trust. Employees must trust the leadership and customers/clients must trust the employees. Employees must truly be valued by the organization. By the way, trust doesn't result by simply being mentioned in the mission or value statement on the company's home page.

Clear Expectations

One consistent element in high performing organizations is a thorough understanding of what is expected of every employee. Having worked with many companies, large and small, I have observed that this element is a key factor in the overall success of the organization. It's not enough for employees to know what's expected of them, but also what they can expect from their leaders and co-workers.

Applicable Skills

Everyone in the organization must have the skills and abilities to accomplish the tasks they are being asked to perform. If an employee is a leader, they require training in leadership skills. If they are a sales professional, then they need training in selling skills. Highly effective organizations truly embrace continued, life-long learning that leads to continuous performance improvement. According to CLO Magazine, economic powerhouse GE spends over \$1 billion on training their employees. In today's difficult economic environment, companies cannot allow their employees performance to erode. Workforce performance improvement is more important now than ever before.

Developmental Feedback

Unlike the earlier story, feedback, more importantly, what I refer to as developmental feedback, is critical to employee engagement. People need to know how they are contributing and how they can go about improving their performance. Companies should measure the right things and recognize the right behaviors.

Attitude of Gratitude

The most civil workplaces are those that have a culture wherein everyone helps one another, including their customers or clients. They are thankful for the organization, for their fellow workers and most importantly, their customers.

Workplace Civility is not something an organization does. It can't be accomplished. It is a way of thinking and acting that encourages high levels of employee engagement and overall performance.

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