

Workplace Civility Pays!



Dr Christine Porath of Georgetown University's McDonough School of Business explains why workplace civility improves individual performance and organisational health at the RSNA plenary session on 2 December. Having also authored many works of the topic of workplace civility, her speaking and consulting clients include Google, United Nations, World Bank, Microsoft, Genentech, Marriott, 3M, Verizon, Ford, World Health Organization, and Cleveland Clinic.

In the session, Dr Porath described several controlled research studies demonstrating how incivility in its many forms, including mocking, teasing, rudeness or texting while in meetings, chips away at an organisation's health and retard the performance of its members. These consequences ranged from reduced effort to poorer performance.

Rudeness and disrespect confer far-reaching penalties, affecting the mind profoundly negatively. It affects both emotions and attention. 'Even employees who witness rudeness perform far worse... They are also less likely to be helpful,' Dr Porath said.

Despite a few uncivil outliers that advance, Dr Porath explains: 'Nice guys do get ahead in the long term... People desperately want to feel respected and when they are, they are healthier, more focused and engaged, and more likely to stay.'

Working with health care management, Dr Porath has seen instances of rudeness in hospitals leading to medical errors. 'We know that health care workers exposed to incivility shut down and become less likely to share information with their team members.' Top explanations leaders give for rude behaviour include stress and a fear of 'being too nice'.

Since 'one toxic employee wipes out the gains of two or more superstars', Dr Porath suggested focusing on careful recruitment and selection to improve organisational culture. In addition, an organisation should create norms, set expectations for new hire, and provide ongoing training and feedback to all employees helps create a culture of civility.

One example of civility training is the empathy training received by Cleveland Clinic which improved patient satisfaction scores and reduced physician burnout. Professionals can also contribute to a civil culture by taking the time to say 'thank you' and listen attentively.

Dr Porath concludes: 'We know civility lifts people up and that incivility hurts people... By being more respectful, we can improve performance, creativity, and helpfulness. By keeping in mind who we want to be on a daily basis, we can lead the world to a better place.'

Source

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