Workplace Civility and Respect

Civility is about more than merely being polite, although being polite is an excellent start. Civility is about being aware of, or anticipating, other people's feelings, and listening and seeking common ground as an initial point for dialogue when differences occur, while at the same time recognizing that differences are enriching. Through positive, respectful communication, one person has the power to improve morale, productivity and teamwork.

Civility involves treating others with dignity and respect, and acting with regard to other's feelings. Staff have a responsibility to act in good faith and be active participants in contributing to the creation and enhancement of a culture of respect, inclusion, civility, dignity and understanding for the people with whom they work.

Civility requires that even the most critical feedback be delivered respectfully, privately, and courteously.

Proactive examples to create a civil work environment include:
- Treat your co-workers, peers and superiors with respect.
- Before speaking or acting, consider the impact of your words and actions on others.
- When there is an issue, try talking to the other person directly and not to co-workers behind their back.
- Don't take feedback, suggestions or constructive criticism of your work as a personal attack. See it as a positive contribution and inspiration to excel.
- Be careful about making assumptions about other people's behaviour and intent based on your values, beliefs and customs. Specific actions that are considered polite or rude can vary dramatically by place, time and context. Differences, including but not limited to social role, gender, social class, religion and cultural identity may all affect the perception of a given behavior. Consequently, a behaviour that is considered perfectly acceptable by some people, and in some cultures, may be considered rude by others.
- Acknowledge the contributions of other employees.
- Understand your triggers or "hot buttons." Knowing what makes you angry and frustrated enables you to manage your reactions and respond in a more appropriate manner.
- Be willing to apologize sincerely to people if you said or did something that may have offended them.
- Use active listening when discussing issues with others.
    - Pay attention. Give the speaker your undivided attention and acknowledge the message.
    - Show that you are listening. Use your own body language and gestures to convey your attention. Recognize that non-verbal communication also "speaks" loudly.
    - Provide feedback. Our personal filters, assumptions, judgments and beliefs can distort what we hear. As a listener, your role is to understand what is being said. This may require you to reflect what is being said and ask question.
    - Defer judgment. Interrupting is a waste of time. It frustrates the speaker and limits full understanding of the message.
    - Respond appropriately. Active listening is a model for respect and understanding. You are gaining information and perspective. Even if you don't agree with another person's perspective, you should respect and acknowledge their feelings.

Most people do not listen with the intent to understand. They listen with the intent to reply.

Whenever feasible, the following steps should be followed in addressing civility related concerns and complaints:

- Peer to peer communication: the parties involved should attempt to resolve issues in the moment or as soon as possible from when the uncivil actions occurred.
- If the parties involved cannot effectively resolve the issue on their own, the complainant(s) should notify their manager. The manager will make inquiries into the issue, and will attempt to remedy the situation within a reasonable time period.
- In the event that the matter is still not resolved, the complainant(s) may exercise their right to lodge a formal complaint with their manager, which must be submitted in writing.
- In cases of gross misconduct, significant action may be taken without proceeding through all the progressive steps.

Disrespect must not be confused with legitimate comment and/or advice from managers and supervisors on the work performance or work-related behaviour of an individual or group. Feedback on work performance or work-related behaviour differs from incivility or harassment in that feedback is intended to assist employees to improve work performance or the standard of their behaviour.

source: Ryerson University, used with permission, GUIDE TO CIVILITY: Creating a Culture of Respect at Ryerson & Dealing with Incivility in the Workplace

Safety Talk Discussion

Be Accountable: Choose safety - work safe - and go home injury free!