

Leadership Civility

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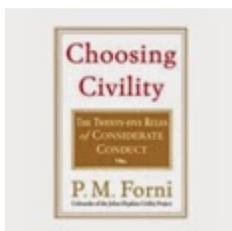
Are you fully satisfied with the growing uncivil culture magnified through movies, TV programs and society in general?



How does it affect your leadership, more specifically your "serving the needs of society", which your behaviors broadcasts to those with whom you interact each and every day.

I am proposing that everyone resolve to be more civil not only in their leadership, but also in their everyday lives and personal interactions with everyone – 24/7, 365 days a year.

For years human nature dictated behavior in treating others with respect, with ethical correctness, and with interactions grounded in the Golden Rule - "Doing unto others as you would like others to do unto you." Our esteemed President George Washington, at age sixteen, created 110 Rules of Civility and Decent Behavior in Company and Conversation, which he based on a set of rules composed by French Jesuits in 1595.



The entertainment media seems to be on a quest to erode that standard with publicly abusive foul language, public sexual conduct that belongs in private, and disrespectful behaviors toward others as if nature gave them the right to do so. All purportedly a God-given right under the First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States, as if it is the natural behavior to exhibit.

For this reason Civility Projects are springing up nationwide attempting to return civility to society - personally and professionally. Hence, the very nature of Servant Leadership is the most logical leadership philosophy to be followed, again personally and professionally.



Speak Your Peace, Rutgers University, Alverno College, and the Oshkosh Civility Project are a few examples of entities who have initiated actions to return civility to society. In addition, P. M. Forni's book "Choosing Civility" expounds on 25 ways to improve civility in human interactions.

Speak your Peace Civility Project suggests 9 Rules of Civility as core behaviors in dealing with others in a civil manner. Below are a few examples for leaders to follow to promote civility and improve their leadership relationship with others.

1. **Pay Attention/Listen.** Listen intently when others are speaking. Inhibit the "inner voice" from interrupting with comments such as "The problem is.....", or "We've always done it this way" in an attempt to stop the flow of ideas and suggestions. Listen for the "intent" and "will" of what is being said. Look for non-verbal communications and maintain eye-to-eye contact with the person with whom you are speaking. Lastly, listen to understand.

2. **Be Inclusive.** Civility knows no ethnicity, no level of leadership, no forum, no religion, no sexual preference, no generation, and no bounds. Being inclusive includes everyone. It is about leading and serving for the betterment of mankind.



3. **No Gossiping.** Gossiping is one of the most hurtful behaviors and accomplishes nothing. Most times it is negative and idle words, that is divisive and destructive. In some cases, it is also racist. All of which, quite possible, only lowers esteem.

4. **Be Respectful.** First of all, remember, respect has nothing to do with liking or disliking someone. Everyone deserves a certain level of respect; we all expect to be respected for who we are and what we have accomplished. A point I always make with my students is that, contrary to the common comment of “respect is earned,” how much more or less respect one garners depends on individual behavior, respect toward others, and the common decency, i.e. civility, extended toward others. Civility is “Respectful Behavior”, Respect is “Honorable Behavior.”

5. **Build Relationships.** Servant Leadership is about building relationships. Therefore, being civil is especially helpful in this process. There is no room for boasting and prideful attitudes, humility is the adhesive that solidifies teamwork and seeks to repair damaged relationships. Seek to apologize, forgive and affirm success of others.

6. **Use Constructive Language.** Be mindful of the words you use, when you use them, and also of the words you speak through your non-verbal communications. Foul language in the middle of the ocean, out of sight and sounds of others, may serve a purpose. However, foul language in a public forum is disrespectful toward others. More specifically, foul language often times indicates an inability to properly use correct language, as well as a limited repository of words and their usage.

7. **Take Responsibility.** Don't shift responsibility or place blame on other people. Hold yourself accountable, accept your own faults, speak positively, clean up your language and respect everyone. **Be The Example!**



These are just a few of examples Servant Leaders need to follow in their interactions with other – all the time, in every situation and regardless of the type of organization in which one belongs.

Not only is it time to restore civility in all aspects of our lives, it is essential in your servant leadership principles and practices.

Are you doing your part? Are you always civil in the example you set for others?

I hereby resolve for 2015 and the coming years that I will “Be the Example!” in treating everyone with Civility in all my personal and leadership behaviors. How about YOU?

Keep the Quest Alive!

~DAM

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