The Cost of Bad Behavior: How Incivility is Damaging Your Business and What to Do About It

By Christine Pearson and Christine Porath
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The authors, Christine Pearson and Christine Porath, spent ten years gathering data about incivility in the workplace. *The Cost of Bad Behavior* explains their research with descriptive data and personal stories, and offers suggestions as to what individuals, organizations, managers, and society can do to promote civility. The book is divided into three parts to address the phenomenon of incivility, its costs, and how to encourage a civil environment. The authors are business professors who have dialogued with individuals all over the world about the topic of incivility. The major themes of communication, leadership, and civility outlined in the book are important topics of conversation with first-year students and would work well in first-year seminars and other first-year type courses, particularly in business or other service-related fields.

In Part I, the authors discuss the phenomenon of incivility and how it is defined, and they cite several examples. Civility is subjective based on individual experiences and interpretations and can be intended or not. The authors give current examples from television sitcoms, movies, and books to provide a sometimes humorous, but accurate picture of incivility. Examples from *The Office, The Simpsons*, World Cup soccer, and *The Devil Wears Prada* help to illustrate examples of incivility for the reader. These types of examples can help students identify with the topic and better articulate the concept of incivility. The authors suggest that incivility can consist of acts such as taking credit from others, texting in a meeting, talking down to others, belittling others, withholding information, or taking needed resources. According to the authors' study, 96 % of individuals reported they experienced incivility at work, 80% of employees believed they did not receive deserved respect, and 94 % of workers stated they were targets of uncivil attempts to "get even." These numbers alone exhibit a major problem in the workforce and its surrounding environment. The study also found that gender and age also play a role in incivility, as men are twice as likely to be uncivil, and on average, offenders are at least six years older than their target.

The authors look at incivility in different contexts such as restaurants, retail stores, government offices, airports, health care, colleges and universities, the world of athletics, politics, the media, and finally, with technology and on the web. Most readers can identify with one or more of these examples and provide their own examples of incivility. By providing different contexts, this chapter has great potential for rich conversation about how individuals experience the world and provide a chance for classmates to become more connected with one another. The experiences shared in the book also contribute to a better understanding of the outcome of incivility and how a small act such as sending a rude email can impact a company's financial resources, personnel resources, and management resources. With guidance and through conversation, students could translate this to their own life and their use of email, Facebook, and twitter as a majority of students have witnessed incivilities on a friend's Facebook page, in their friend group, or on TV. These connections and conversations could helpstu-

dents strengthen their critical thinking skills in and out of the classroom.

In Part II, the authors discuss the costs of incivility in the workplace. They provide a small case study performed by Cisco, a large multinational corporation, as well as many examples to show how incivility can be calculated in the loss of money, workers, and company loyalty. From human resource management and managers' time spent on an issue, to stress-induced time lost on the job, companies can actually lose more than previously thought when incivility is tolerated in the company environment. Individuals decrease work effort, time at work, work quality, and increase time worrying and avoiding the offender, and 78% are less committed to the organization itself. The authors discussed the study they conducted where participants were divided into groups. Some of the participants were subjected to uncivil behavior, while others were not; the results showed that those who were subjected to uncivil interactions were less able to concentrate on tasks after that interaction.

The book also discusses how stress and burnout contribute to the costs of incivility. For example, if individuals do not feel like they are not valued on teams, they are less engaged and contribute less. In an uncivil environment, workers are less likely to trust others and work collaboratively, and this can impact customers and their experiences. Witnessing incivility as a customer has severe consequences; 83% of those in the study shared that negative experience with friends and family, 55% looked less favorably towards the organization, and 50% were less willing to use the company's products. At the conclusion of the discussion about incivility and how it affects organizations and individuals, the authors transitioned to the last part of the book, which discussed what individuals, organizations, managers, and society can do to solve the problem of incivility.

Part III includes examples of ways five organizations accomplished a mission of civility, provides the authors' top ten things an organization should do to create a civil environment: giving specific attention to what leaders can do, what target's can do, what offender's can do, and finally, what society can do. These final chapters are ways for individuals to make a difference in their environment. In the discussion, the authors extend the conversation about civility into the venues of athletics, the Internet, and our global society. These three topics are very relevant for most students in one way or another. Critical thinking skills can be developed through discussion about these issues, examples, and experiences. Students can connect major themes to other classes, future employment, and greater societal issues.

Because this book addresses incivility in the business world, there could be an argument that students might not relate to the book; however, with personal examples and the overall effect incivility could have on the world around them, this book might provide not only insight about civility, but also methods for dealing with that incivility. In the final chapter of the book, the authors discuss different community outreach programs and university service learning programs that help to promote civility. By incorporating this book along with university wide civility outreach initiatives and service learning opportunities, some communities could see a tremendous impact on civility. The book could serve as a catalyst for an institution-wide initiative to improve campus civility or communitywide initiative to improve the surrounding neighborhoods. Student discussions could include how civility could be a small gesture or something larger and how, through civility, each institution has the opportunity to improve itself and its students, departments, and community by fostering civility and integrating it into its mission.

A major contribution of this book is the possible discussions students can have around the topic of civility, including the importance of communication. This book could motivate students to improve their own work lives, future work lives, and attempt to have a positive impact in their current and future leadership roles. Students see incivility every day, and if a class of students reads this book, has engaging and innovative dialogues and decides to change the culture of a campus, a community, a residence hall, or a student group, the possibilities are endless. This book provides great

examples and helpful measures to accomplish a healthy, civil environment. More importantly, students have the opportunity to stand up and communicate with others their demands for a civil college or university environment.

Leadership is another running theme in the book. Leaders are individuals that address incivility and do not tolerate those behaviors that are not civil. Leaders are everyday individuals who do not look the other way and take initiative when others are being treated poorly. These discussions could serve resident assistants, orientation leaders, leadership class participants, peer mentors, and other leaders on campus in a positive manner. As noted in the book, one act of incivility can make individuals lose concentration and gain stress. Sharing this information with first-year students could help them better understand how their uncivil acts or those that they experience can affect their success.

Overall, this book addresses major issues in higher education today and provides an opportunity for students to collaborate. The authors' discussion on global civility and our immediate connectivity to the world offers a perfect introduction to talking with students about technology and its impact as well as understanding internationalization on multiple levels in their community, nationally, and globally. Issues such as posting an inappropriate update or photo on Facebook, internet bullying, and venting via Twitter are topics of conversation that could be addressed and help to create a more civil campus online environment. Discussions about the content could be conducted in first-year or common reading programs, specific discipline-related courses, and other matriculation programming.

The Cost of Bad Behavior can apply to everyday life as a student, and lessons learned from this book and open discussion around major themes can help students develop. Considering different viewpoints, participating in community service, and reflection are the heart of this book and the concept of civility. In a fast-paced environment like a college campus, students can learn a lot from the simple message of civility. Many have a negative outlook that incivility is taking over our society; it is the role of higher education to expose students to these ideas early and help students integrate civility into their values and expectations. In the historic tradition of higher education, we must educate students about civility and social responsibility, or we risk limiting ourselves and our students' future potential and this book and subsequent conversations could be vehicles for some of that education.