

Changing a Toxic Culture

Gian Lozano MSW,MBA

Characteristics of Incivility

Felblinger (2009) considers incivility as having three characteristics:

- It is psychological in nature.
- Considered to be a form of low intensity, inconsiderate conduct.
- Associated with an ambiguous intent to harm or target (p.14).

Examples of Incivility



[This Photo](#) by Unknown Author is licensed under [CC BY-ND](#)

According to Felblinger(2009) examples of incivility include:

- Rude comments
- Verbal aggression
- Being disrespectful
- Lack of collaboration
- Ethnic jokes & Slurs
- Sexual comments
- Attacking a person's integrity
- Blaming others
- Withholding important information (p. 15)

Characteristics of Bullying

According to Felblinger (2009), bullying is comprised of three characteristics:

- Repetitive behavior that occurs at least two times per week.
- Longer term behavior continuing for at least six months
- The behavior happens where the person, or people find it difficult to defend themselves , or stop the abuse (p.16).

Domains of Bullying



[This Photo](#) by Unknown Author is licensed under [CC BY-ND](#)

Ramsay et al. (2010) indicates bullying include:

- Abusive supervision
- Harm to reputation
- Threatening
- Intimidating
- Sabotage
- Isolation (p. 802)
- May be verbal or physical and are similar to domestic violence (Sawyer, 2017)

Responses to Workplace Aggression

Incivility is often viewed as lower intensity compared with bullying, but as a result of differences in people's perception, the interpretation of the same act may elicit greater or lesser responses.

People may have different tolerance levels for incivility and bullying. One person may be able to shrug off an act of mild aggression, where another may feel deeply injured by a similar act.

Work teams are powerful in that the team context can influence whether a member assesses a behavior as negative, or having a motive (Paulin & Griffin, 2016).

Human Costs:

The human effects of aggressive behavior on employees erodes engagement and morale, team spirit disappears and creativity suffers (Porath & Pearson, 2013).

There is a decrease in job satisfaction, increase in burnout and less organizational commitment (Tre'Panier et al., 2013).

More damaging effects of bullying include Increased stress, sleep disturbance, anxiety, depression and psychosomatic symptoms (Rodriquez-Munoz et al., 2009).

Organizational Costs:

Surveys of employees have shown 98% of them have experienced incivility (Porath & Pearson, 2013).

As many as 37% of employees have themselves been bullied (Sawyer, 2017).

Porath & Pearson (2013) found in a poll of over 800 employees and managers who experienced workplace aggression, that 48% intentionally decreased their work effort.

Organizational Costs Continued

- 38% decreased the quality of their work.
- 80% lost work time worrying about the uncivil event.
- 63% lost work time by avoiding the person who was uncivil.
- 78% had a decline in organizational commitment.
- 12% said they left their job because of experiencing uncivil behavior.
- 25% report taking it out on their customers
- It was found to reduce creativity by 30% fewer ideas (p. 117).

University of Southern California(USC) Study

One study conducted by USC involved two groups of bank customers. One group witnessed a bank manager reprimand an employee for not processing paperwork correctly. The other group did not witness this uncivil behavior.

It was found that only 20% of the customers who witnessed the reprimand would use the banks services in the future. However, 80% of the customers who had not witnessed the reprimand reported they would use the banks services again (Porath & Pearson, 2013).



[This Photo](#) by Unknown Author is licensed under [CC BY-ND](#)

Aggressive behavior in the healthcare arena is associated with problems such as high caseloads, turnover, productivity and absenteeism.

While it is suggested that aggressive work behavior cost corporations an estimated 200 billion dollars (Sawyer, 2017).

Broad Strokes of Workplace Aggression

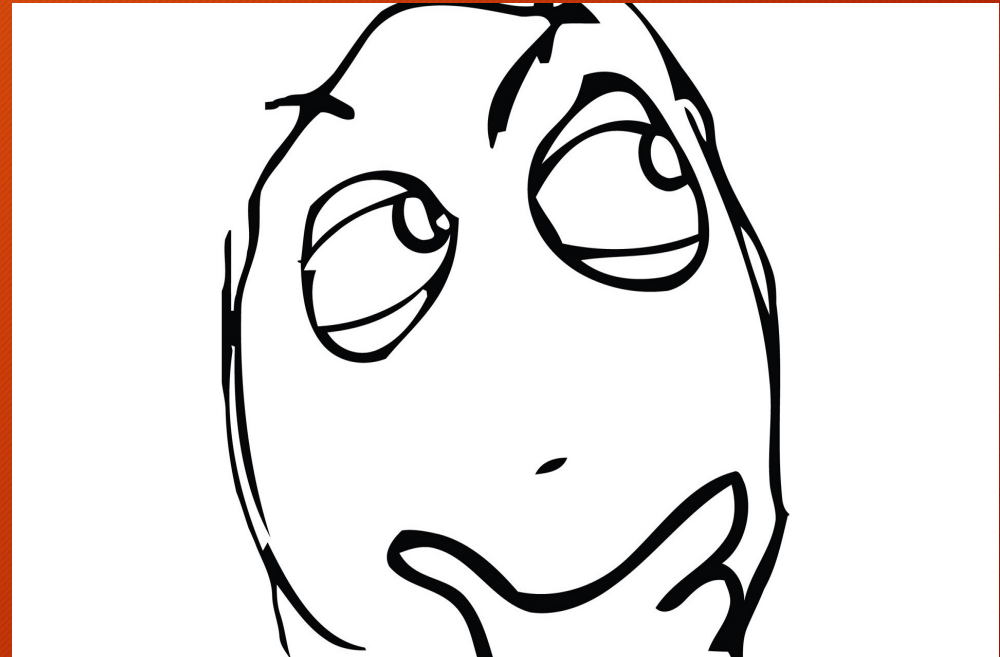
- Researchers have done a fine job identifying aggression in the workplace, the severity, prevalence, cultural aspects and many other defining characteristics.
- The pain and suffering experienced by employees is clearly devastating. While the economic costs further add to organizations being dysfunctional, toxic and unhealthy.
- While understanding how causing harm is detrimental, aggression is so nuanced it is difficult to address.

Nuances in Workplace Aggression

- Nuances can complicate addressing workplace aggression.
- People may believe aggression is part of a competitive team.
- Some may not realize their behavior constitutes as being aggressive.
- People think by ignoring the behavior it may go away on its own.
- The quest for generating profits can put strain on work relationships.
- Leadership may not have the depth of understanding to make addressing bullying and incivility a priority.
- Supervisors may be conflict averse, or not have the skills to address the problems.

Think Differently about Workplace Aggression

- Whatever we use to try and reduce workplace aggression, must be accompanied by a component that will change human behavior.
- It takes a systems approach including education, behavioral change interventions, policy and accountability to change and sustain such complex behaviors.



[This Photo](#) by Unknown Author is licensed under [CC BY-NC-ND](#)

Can People Change?

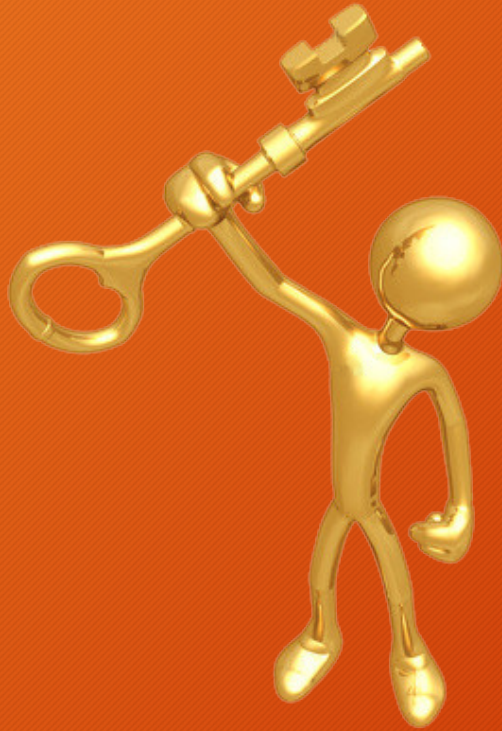
I only ask this question because there have been supervisors and managers alike who have said “I don’t believe John Doe can change”.

“You can’t teach an old dog new tricks”.

The human brain has high levels of neuroplasticity and the ability for our brains to form new connections, learn and change behavior at any age (Rock, 2009).

Since people can learn new content and change their behavior, then what’s really needed for people to make the effort?

Leadership holds the Key



[This Photo](#) by Unknown Author is licensed under [CC BY-NC](#)

- Leadership has the power to make organizational changes.
- 72% of bullies are supervisors (Sawyer, 2017).
- Coercive leadership style is aggressive, lowers morale and reduces employee motivation (Goleman, 2000).
- Authentic leadership is negatively associated with bullying (Nielson, 2013).

Workplace Aggression, while outcomes

Employee engagement is reached via a framework that creates high levels of value and motivation, which transforms work group culture from toxic and dysfunctional to healthy and thriving.

Employee engagement involves cognitive, emotional and behavioral dimensions and leads to satisfaction, motivation and increased profitability (Sharma & Kaur, 2014).

Harter found that organizations with high levels of engaged employees are 21% more profitable than their competitors (2018).

Definition of Employee Engagement

A measurable degree of an employee's positive, or negative emotional attachment to their job, colleagues and organization, which profoundly influences their willingness to learn and perform at work (Sharma & Kaur, p. 41, 2014).

Employee Engagement Framework

- Employee engagement framework is comprised of elements (Rana et al.) such as:
- Job control
- Rewards
- Communication
- Workplace relationships (2014)
- Leadership style (Emery et al., 2007)

Supervisor's Positive Behavior

Employee engagement is reliant upon the leader (direct supervisor), performing and sustaining positive behaviors and gestures, related to each of the elements, toward his employees.

Mawritz et al. suggests that the effects of positive behavior trickle down to the group, who will then in turn, mimic similar behaviors to each other (2012).

The synergy between these elements appears to potentiate its effects and increase motivation to rebuild trust between supervisors and employees, commit to the new positive behavior and improve organizational performance.

Employee Engagement Changes Culture

When supervisors consistently initiate engagement building behavior toward their employees, team culture becomes healthier and less aggressive over time.

Just as bullying and incivility can lead to a toxic work environment, implementing a framework for achieving high levels of engaged employees changes the work culture (i.e. values, beliefs, attitudes and behavior), to an environment that is thriving and performing highly.

Spectrum from Bullying to Engagement

Although changing human behavior is a non linear process, workplace aggression and engagement move from having increased dysfunction on the far left moving to high levels to the far right.

- behavior-----Bullying-----incivility-----neutral-----satisfied-----engaged-----Behavior+

Outcomes such as work quality, turnover, absenteeism and burnout may be easier to predict given where the group is along the spectrum.

Workplace Aggression and Engagement are Mirror Opposites of Each Other

Bullying & Incivility

- Low levels of trust
- Low psychological safety
- Increased turnover
- Higher operational costs
- Lower productivity
- Low organizational commitment
- Higher rates of depression
- Decreased satisfaction
- High Burnout

Employee Engagement

- High levels of trust
- High psychological safety
- High retention
- Lower operational costs
- Increased productivity
- High organizational commitment
- Increased wellbeing
- Increased job satisfaction
- Lower burnout

MSPB Study

Lavigna, found a federal MSPB study revealed higher levels of engagement correlated with:

- More success achieving strategic goals.
- Higher employee retention rates.
- Less sick leave and lost time due to work related illness and injury.
- Fewer EEO complaints (p. 8, 2004).

Case Study: Employee Engagement

Changing a Toxic Culture Through Employee Engagement Consulting

References

Bullying Coach. [Digital image]. (n.d.). Retrieved <http://whatwillmatter.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/AA-Bullying-tcoach-bullying-student.jpg>

Emery, C. R., Erskine, C., Barker, K. J., Fredonia, S. (2007). The Effect of Transactional Leadership Styles on the Organizational Commitment and Job Satisfaction of Customer Contact Personnel. *Journal of Organizational Culture, Communication and Conflict*, 11(1), 77-90.

Felblinger, D. M., (2009). Bullying, Incivility, and Disruptive Behaviors in the Healthcare Setting: Identification, Impact, and Intervention. *Frontiers of Health Services Management*, 25(4), 13-23.

Gold Man Holding key. [Digital image]. (n.d.). Retrieved <http://www.legal.adv.br/img/refs/chave.png>

Goleman, D. (2000). Leadership that get Results. *Harvard Business Review*, 1-17.

References

Harter, J. (2018). Employee Engagement on the Rise in the U.S.. Retrieved <https://news.gallup.com/poll/241649/employee-engagement-rise.aspx>

Kids Bullying. [Digital image]. (n.d.). Retrieved http://1.bp.blogspot.com/_6iyyhNHJjtl/SgbzIzQdEGI/AAAAAAAAAv0/UM5Xizl6hoo/w1200-h630-p-k-no-nu/bullying.jpg

Lavigna, R., (2014). Now is the Time to Improve Federal Employee Engagement. *The Public Manager*, 7-10.

Man Thinking. [Digital image]. (n.d.). Retrieved <http://onyxtruth.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/Meme-thinking-face-1920x1080.jpg>

Mawritz, M. B., Mayer, D. M., Hoobler, J. M., Wayne, S. J., Marinova, S. V. (2012). A Trickle-Down Model of Abusive Supervision. *Personal Psychology*, 65, 325-357.

References

Money Down the Drain. [Digital image]. (n.d.). Retrieved <https://62e528761d0685343e1cf3d1b99a743ffa4142d9d7f1978d9686.ssl.cf2.rackcdn.com/files/231777/width668/76db97fb-1367557319.jpg>

Nielsen, M. B., (2013). Bullying in Work Groups: The Impact of Leadership. *Scandinavian Journal of Psychology*, 54, 127-136.

Paulin, D., Griffin, B., (2016). The Relationships between Incivility, Team Climate for Incivility and Job-related Employees Well-being: A Multilevel Analysis. *Work and Stress*, 30(2), 132-151.

Porath, C., Pearson, C., (2013). The Price of Incivility Lack of Respect Hurts Morale-And the Bottom Line. *Harvard Business Review*, 115-121.

Ramsay, S., Troth, A., Branch, S., (2011). Work-Place Bullying: A Group Process Framework. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, 84, 799-816.

References

Rana, S., Ardichvili, A., Tkachenko, O., (2014). A Theoretical Model of the Antecedents and Outcomes of Employee Engagement. *Journal of Workplace Learning*, 26(3/4), 249-266.

Rock, D., (2009). Managing with the Brain in Mind. *Strategy + Business*, 56, 1-10.

Rodriguez-Munoz, A., Baillien, E., De Witte, H., Moreno-Jimenez, B., Pastor, J. C., (2009). Cross-lagged Relationships between Workplace Bullying, Job satisfaction and Engagement: Two Longitudinal Studies. *Work & Stress*, 23(3), 225-243.

Sharma, S. K., Kaur, S., (2014). An Introspection of Employee Engagement: A Quantitative Content Analysis Approach. *The IUP Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 23(2), 38-57.

Trepanier, S. G., Fernet, C., Austin, S., (2013). Workplace Bullying and Psychological Health at Work: The Mediating Role of Satisfaction of Needs for Autonomy, Competence and Relatedness. *Work & Stress*, 27(2), 123-140.

Thank You

Questions?