



SOFT SKILLS AND CIVILITY

ADDITIONAL TRAINING PROPOSAL

Objective: To assist in the cultivation and sustaining of healthy workplace culture.

By: Angela Powell

“Leaders become great, not because of their power but because of their ability to empower others.” – John C. Maxwell

SOFT SKILLS AND CIVILITY

The development of soft skills and civility is crucial in order to have healthy relationships both personally and in the workplace. The foundation of this knowledge is well documented and researched in the field of psychology, sociology, human resources and leadership. Often times successful businesses refer to human relationship specialists and tools created by professionals in the previously mentioned fields in order to have healthy and productive work environments. Many studies show that the workplace environment and culture ultimately affect the efficacy of the company's goals and success. Soft skills regards interpersonal communication and civility regards the manners and adeptness of said interpersonal skills. To explain, we will go over a few fundamental points as to why this is important at work and how these principles can work for everyone.

What is workplace culture?

Culture is defined as, "customary beliefs, practices, attitudes, values or goals shared by a group of people." The workplace culture is made of the individuals working for the group as well as regular participants, clients or customers of the said group. While each individual might have their own personal cultures they come from, they participate in the organizations culture while at work. The workplace culture's foundation is created by the established organizational goals, structure and management. The workplace culture is fueled by the individuals underlying behavior, attitudes and beliefs while at work. Everyone effects their environment and contributes to culture.

What is toxic culture?

Toxic culture is popularly defined as behaviors from management or staff that effect the health, happiness and productivity of those in the environment. Usually these behaviors go unchecked causing long term issues without proper leadership or training. It has been shown in statistics that toxic work culture can affect a company's productivity, bottom line and overall success. Toxic work culture can not only effect productivity but lead to the company losing valuable employees, cause physical stress or psychosocial health concerns for individuals, increased sick days, effects the company's reputation, revenue and longevity of the company's existence.

**STAFF TO
CLIENT**

**CLIENT TO
CLIENT**

**STAFF TO
STAFF**

*"Anybody who lives
in presence
predominantly
contributes to a
change in the world
in what I call, a new
Earth." -Eckhart
Tolle*

Numerous resources exist regarding company culture, toxic workplace culture, effective leadership and related health, and sociological fields. I do not claim these popular ideas as my own only the manner of its presentation. This paper was written regarding personal experiences and with past brief exposure from publications by experts in those fields. Any contestable likeliness of previous publications is purely unintentional. -A.P.

Toxic behavior can include things like:

Gossip, Social Manipulation, Hours worked and payment fraud or manipulation

Bullying, Narcissism, Gaslighting, Hazing, Lying, Overly competitive,

Taking credit for others work or downplaying others performance

Subversion of duties and other unhealthy social behaviors.

Interpersonal relationships: Unconscious Behaviors to Mindfulness

It is true that not everyone comes from the same culture or has the same level of self-awareness, maturity or personal code of morals and conduct. Some individuals are not gifted with diverse learning experiences when they are younger or may have been taught adverse values that are actually unproductive and unhealthy. Some individuals can be easily subjected to normalize toxic culture by peer pressure simply because they have bills to pay or that they want to be included which is normal to want to be accepted. Because of this, toxic behavior might appear to be normal acceptable behavior personally and or at work. This is one way toxic culture can unconsciously take hold of a company's productivity and the happiness even health of staff and management. By touching on some of these points we can alter our culture from being one of unconscious behaviors to a culture of mindfulness.

Healthy Self Esteem

Basically, individuals with healthy levels of self esteem do not need to use toxic social habits to hurt or placate others in order to feel good. Over-competitiveness can be linked to biological basic survival needs except we are not animals; we are humans gifted with the ability to communicate and problem solve instead of competing for resources. There is the popular phrase, "many hands make light work." Many can attest to the power of instilling a team spirit in any setting however, an emphasis on hierarchy in the workplace can be counterproductive. Too much competition causes distrust, discord and helps create the toxic workplace environment. Fear based leadership and an imbalance of merit-based rewards as well as seniority beliefs can also greatly contribute to unnecessary rivalry and tension in a company culture. Are your systems of merit and acknowledgement fair? How are we supporting healthy self-esteem by empowering individuals, staff and clients alike?

The Golden Rule: Empathy and Accountability

One interesting similarity in nearly all major religions and philosophies of the world throughout antiquities have some version of what is known as, "The Golden Rule," in short, treat others the way you would like to be treated. Not acknowledging the sadomasochists out there, I am sure most people enjoy being treated well however, not everyone is always conscious of their behavior or like mentioned earlier may have different perspectives on what is proper social conduct. Sometimes it helps to have another's perspective if we would like to grow and work well with others. Sometimes, if we are emotional, our communication may not be efficient, or our own personal needs can appear to come before others. This is when we can strive to remember the golden rule in practicing empathy and why

having a healthy line of communication and accountability between staff and management can help one another become aware and make changes or alterations in personal behaviors or attitudes. Practicing empathy and picking your “battles” can help an individual find a balance of communication and self - accountability.

Growing Personally is Growing Professionally

Here in lies the secret to success. Many articles have been published regarding the personal habits of billionaires or famous people and secrets of successful companies. These materials sell because success is innately desired as being satiated, give or take a degree pertaining to each individual. In addition to these topics, major religions and philosophies give an individual a wide assortment of options for references regarding personal or inner growth. The growth mindsets and mindfulness cultures and trends are very popular under the notion that self-mastery, self-leadership and personal work can help you transform your interpersonal relationships and overall success, health and happiness in life. If you are in a toxic environment, this can make inner work difficult with unneeded distractions which can ultimately affect the company’s culture, because again, the culture is comprised of the wellbeing, mindset and behavior of the individual. When a company acknowledges that culture begins with inner work and fostering everyone’s inner growth, the company can grow along with the individuals and become a company of leaders growing personally and professionally.

Team Building: Honorable Deeds and Words

Often times people react or act with unconscious bias and fear. With trust being the antithesis to fear, team building methods and initiatives can begin to bridge the gaps in relationships. Fear and mistrust hinder the growth of healthy relationships. When we take the time to build trust with honorable words and deeds, the environment shifts from toxicity to one of relativity and productivity. If we look at our interpersonal relationships, self-esteem, empathy and accountability, personal growth, team spirit, and the honor in our deeds and words, then we can consciously shape the culture that we would like to be part of.

With these principles in mind the individuals in the company can better focus on the mission of creating an empathetic, safe, healthy and supportive environment for clients, staff and management. The areas of focus and key points can help guide individuals in the process of mindfulness and the cultivation of soft skills and civility.

Staff to Client Client to Client Staff to Staff

Key points in momentary self-assessment:

Intention: What is my intention in communicating?

Tone: Is my tone relative to my intention?

Delivery: Are the words that I am choosing genuinely expressing my thoughts and feelings? Are my words mindful of others thoughts and feelings?

Synergy: Is there an equal give and take in communication? Am I listening as much as I am speaking? Are they open to me communicating right now?