

West Texas Rural
Philanthropy Days

CULTIVATING

STRONG STAFF

Building Cultures of Care, Accountability, and
Connection



Permian Basin



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The Cost of Incivility

- **223M** acts of incivility occur daily
- **36 minutes** of lost productivity [each occurrence]
- **\$2B** in daily earnings lost
- Incivility is not a soft tissue, it is a measurable business risk

Nonprofits: Incivility leads to burnout that leads to mission drift

For-Profits: Incivility leads to disengagement that leads to monetary loss

Three Types of Leaders

- **Toxic Leader** — Fear-based, inconsistent, unpredictable
- **Nice Leader** — Pleasant, avoids accountability
- **Kind Leader** — Direct, Fair, Consistent,
People-Centric/People-First

Microaggressions: Small behaviors, Big Impact

- Mispronouncing (or continuously forgetting) Names
- Prioritizing speaking over listening
- Misgendering
- Assuming caregiving limitations
- Ignoring accessibility needs
- Flexibility Shaming

Microaggressions are small, repeated behaviors that accumulate into exclusion

Micro-inclusions: The Antidote

- Using correct pronouns
- Checking in with colleagues
- Publicly acknowledging contributions
- Practicing active listening
- Expressing appreciation frequently

Micro-inclusions are intentional, repeatable acts that build trust and a sense of belonging

Intent vs. Impact

- Good intentions do not erase harmful outcomes
- Civility requires awareness, humility, and course correction

Please note: I didn't mean it. Just kidding. These words don't stop what is heard by other from hurting other people.

People-first Leadership

- Culture begins with care
- Every employee asks: "Am I OK?"
- Managers/Leaders are custodians of trust
- Technology [AI] must enhance humanity, not replace it
- Employees remember how they were treated
- Care-centered culture prevents burnout

Care leads to trust, trust to engagement, engagement to performance

Building Relationship WITH employees

Doing so

- Establishes psychological safety
- Normalizes check-ins and feedback loops
- Recognizes contributions consistently
- Models empathy and active listening
- Addresses microaggressions promptly and respectfully

Employees thrive when leaders establish relational, and not transactional, cultures

Building Relationships with Potential Employees

- Recruitment as a relationship, not a transaction
- Inclusive interviewing practices
- Transparent communication
- Respect for candidate time and identity
- Mission alignment [nonprofit] vs. value alignment [for-profit]

The same relational mindset extends beyond employees to stakeholders

Building Relationships With Stakeholders

- Civility signals credibility
- Inclusion signals trustworthiness
- Micro-inclusions strengthen external relationships
 - Key to building long-term trust

AI & Human Connection

- Leveraging AI to accelerate workflows
- We as leaders must safeguard humanity
- Use AI to enhance, not replace, connection
- AI can help identify patterns of burnout, turnover, or disengagement
- Leaders must stay anchored in empathy

Note: AI accelerates work; Leaders preserve humanity

Action steps for leadership

- Daily Leadership Practices
- Model empathy
- Listen deeply
- Act consistently
- Reinforce micro-inclusions
- Address microaggressions early
- Build systems that support civility

Consistency is the currency of trust

Friend vs. Leader in the Workplace

- Two distinct roles
- Leader's role is to lead, make decisions, ensure fair and consistent treatment of all employees. This includes performance management, resource allocation, and maintaining objectivity.
- Friendship, by contrast, is built on trust, shared personal experiences, informal connection.
- Although friendship can enhance morale and engagement, this can also lead to conflicts of interest in the organization and undermine authority.

Favoritism is a form of incivility because it creates a perceived [real] and inconsistent treatment of the work group

Blurred Lines

- The risks involved include
- Perceived favoritism
- Loss of Authority
- Confidentiality Breaches
- Dual Relationship [Friendship vs. Management] conflict

Blurred boundaries erode trust and create inequity

Seeking Balance

- Set Clear Boundaries
- Be Fair and Consistent in all business decisions
- Communicate the power shift from peer to manager
- Maintain Professionalism
- Use friendship selectively

Boundaries protect both relationship and fairness

Balancing Friendship and Leadership in the Workplace

- This can be achieved, but only:
 - Friendship is professional
 - Boundaries are respected
 - Fairness is maintained
- Having this balance fosters trust, engagement, and effective leadership without compromising your authority as an organizational leader or the team's performance.

Final thought: Healthy balance strengthens trust without compromising authority

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QUESTIONS & DISCUSSION



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