

A decorative graphic on the left side of the page features several thick, flowing lines in red, yellow, teal, and green, curving downwards from the top left towards the bottom left.

CIVILITY COUNTS

An Image Perspective

White Paper

The Civility Counts Project

The Source for Image Professionals®

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BACKGROUND

Around the world there is a universal cry lamenting the decline in civility and its impact on the lives of people from all walks of life, regardless of their race, creed or status. Uncivil acts such as rudeness, cell phone abuse, road rage, cheating, lying and maligning are all too commonplace in today's world. Whether large or small, acts of incivility intrude upon and mar the quality of our daily lives as we travel on airplanes, roads and trains, sit in classrooms, the workplace and sports arenas or gather for worship. Unwittingly, we have learned to live with and engage in these behaviors while becoming, consciously and unconsciously, victims and participants in countless ways. The global decline in long-established core values and standards of behavior has eroded the quality of social interactions on all levels. Given the near absence of education and training in manners, etiquette and character in schools, families and communities, the growing pervasiveness of incivility across the globe poses a serious challenge for society.

CIVILITY – DEFINITION AND ORIGIN

Just what is civility and where and when did the word originate? Civility is all about kindness, consideration, sensitivity, caring, giving and nurturing. It is a code of conduct based on the principles of RESPECT, RESTRAINT, RESPONSIBILITY, with specific rules of conduct that can be applied to everyday living. Together, the three "R" principles and rules of conduct that guide our behavior towards one another are the essence of civility as defined by Professor P.M. Forni, co-founder of the Civility Project at Johns Hopkins University. The rules, listed below, are outlined in his book *Choosing Civility – The Twenty Five Rules of Considerate Conduct* (St. Martin's Griffin, New York, 2002).



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THE 25 RULES OF CONSIDERATE CONDUCT

1. Pay Attention
2. Acknowledge Others
3. Think the Best
4. Listen
5. Be Inclusive
6. Speak Kindly
7. Don't Speak Ill
8. Accept and Give Praise
9. Respect Even a Subtle "No"
10. Respect Others' Opinions
11. Mind Your Body
12. Be Agreeable
13. Keep it Down (Rediscover Silence)
14. Respect Others People's Time
15. Respect Other People's Space
16. Apologize Earnestly
17. Assert Yourself
18. Avoid Personal Questions
19. Care for Your Guests
20. Be a Considerate Guest
21. Think Twice Before Asking Favors
22. Refrain From Idle Complaints
23. Accept and Give Constructive Criticism
24. Respect the Environment and Be Gentle to Animals
25. Don't Shift Responsibility and Blame



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These rules are by no means new. In *Choosing Civility*, Dr. Forni reminds us that the rules of civility have been with us in one form or another for a very long time. They can be found in the religious writings of many faiths and the works of nearly all the great philosophers. Through the ages and up to modern times, self-help books on manners, etiquette, social graces and related topics have continued to prevail. The rules of considerate conduct are simply practical, common sense actions everyone can take on a daily basis.

The origins of the word civility lie in its connection to *Civitas*, a Latin word meaning city, and the French word *civilité* which is most typically translated to mean politeness. Civility also shares a connection with the word civilization. The root meaning of this word which is 'member of household' suggests that acting with civility means recognizing that one is part of a society (company, organization or household) and that if we are to be of moral character, our behavior must be guided accordingly by rules and standards of conduct. This is irrespective of whether we like or agree with the persons to whom we are relating. Such behavior often involves personal sacrifice exercised through self-restraint.

In the book, *Civility – Manners, Morals and the Etiquette of Democracy* (Harper Perennial Press, 1998), author Dr. Stephen Carter, explains that civility means more than just being good, kind or saying nice words to others. Rather, his book clarifies that civility "suggests an approach to life ... a way of carrying one's self and relating to others...." Civility is a code of behavior that reflects care and concern for the well being of fellow citizens and a sense of neighborly good will and citizenship. We are however, reminded by Dr. Carter's book that historical record includes examples where civility, manners and etiquette were used to support the disenfranchisement of one group over the other. He notes that society is still healing and learning from these experiences.

Dr. Giovinella Gonthier offers a broad view of civility in her book *Rude Awakenings – Overcoming the Civility Crisis in the Workplace* (Dearborn



Civility Counts – An Image Perspective

Trade Publishing, Chicago, 2002). Shaped by international experience, during which she has encountered rudeness, bullying, maltreatment and injustice of all kinds, Dr. Gonthier defines civility as “being mindful of the dignity of the human being in your sphere at all times. Civility is not so much about niceties as it is about the way we live our lives overall and the way we treat other people.”

CIVILITY TODAY

Is civility important? This and other related questions were posed to a small group of thought leaders during the pre-study phase of a civility research project conducted by the Association of Image Consultants International (AICI). The survey also sought opinions on why civility is important and whether it is on the decline. Survey participants represented a broad cross section of professions and ages. Highlighted summaries of their responses are listed below.



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SUMMARY RESPONSES ON CIVILITY FROM THOUGHT LEADERS IN THE USA

(AICI Civility Research Pre-Study, December 2009)

Is Civility Important?

- Civility is vital to the peaceful, harmonious and cohesive existence of individuals, groups and organizations
- Civility is fine sometimes but could stifle free speech
- Civility is vital. Without it there would be chaos
- Civility is the basis of civilized interaction

Why is Civility Important?

- Civility is only important if it promotes peace and stimulates opportunities for human growth and development
- Showing courtesy to others is the simplest form of respect
- Civility is the basis of civilized interaction
- Civility is what used to be known as manners and respect. It has declined since the sexual revolution of the 60s and 70s, while self-obsession appears to be on the rise
- Civility is a matter of choice and has long term implications for one's life
- Civility demonstrates being educated, peaceful, well-behaved and civilized
- Civility is important for leadership, management and our humanity
- Lack of civility may be a precursor for violence
- Civility is a defining attribute of the image or brand of an individual, company or institution. As such, it is an important determinant for the quality of all relationships
- Civility promotes intercultural communication, dialogue and peaceful co-existence



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All survey participants agreed that civility is definitely declining. Differences in generational views, instant media, technology, anti-establishment sentiments and breakdown in family structure, were cited as factors contributing to the decline in civility. One participant expressed the thought that civility might be seen as a negative, a sign of weakness or being “uncool.”

HIGHLIGHTS OF AICI MEMBER SURVEY ON CIVILITY

In 2009, AICI conducted a survey of its international membership to determine the level of civility awareness and to gather opinions and suggestions that would help shape future actions. The following highlights are based on responses from 13% of the membership. A significant majority of the respondents or 72.1% believes that people are more uncivil today than they were 20 years ago and 63% think that rudeness in the workplace is on the rise. A lack of respect and consideration was cited by 83.6% of respondents as the major cause for incivility. The absence of civility training, lack of patience, callousness and selfishness were identified as other causes of incivility. When asked where they experienced incivility the most, 53% percent cited shopping and 6% percent mentioned traveling. Additional responses to this question cited telephone interaction, performance events and the workplace. It is noteworthy that 85.4% of respondents said they would take their business elsewhere after a personal experience with rudeness.

CIVILITY AND IMAGE

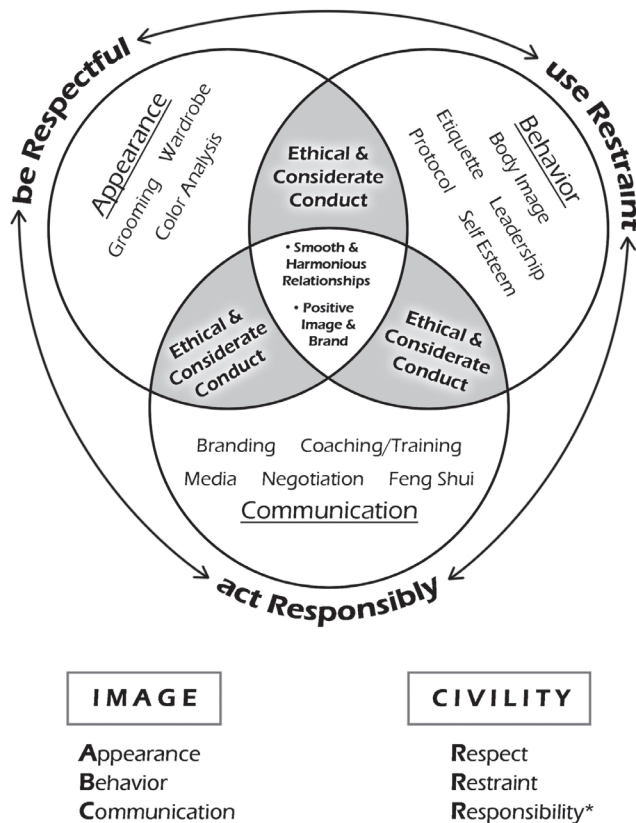
Because civility embraces ethics, goodness, kindness, giving, thoughtfulness, civic engagement and the spirit of community, it is intrinsic to personal and corporate image. Image is all about Appearance, Behavior and Communication and their defining elements, which include grooming and wardrobe, body image, etiquette, self-esteem, networking, branding, negotiating and nonverbal communication. These aspects of image influence the perception of individuals and organizations. Civility is the substance that shapes a positive image from the inside out. It is the foundation for building a strong image and brand.

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When individuals and organizations demonstrate ethical and considerate conduct in their business and personal relationships, workplace attire, leadership, branding, community involvement, professional development and employee relations, they embrace the spirit of civility.

The *Image and Civility Model* below shows that harmonious relationships, a positive image and brand are at the center of the place where ethical and considerate conduct intersects with Appearance, Behavior and Communication. The three “R” civility principles of Respect, Restraint and Responsibility, as defined by Dr. Forni, are interdependent, sustaining forces in the sensitive arena of business and social interaction represented by the model.

The Image and Civility Model



* Principles of civility defined by Dr. P.M. Forni, author, *Choosing Civility - The 25 Rules of Considerate Conduct*
Developed exclusively for AICI by Yasmin Anderson-Smith, MCRP, AICI CIP



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CIVILITY IN THE WORKPLACE

Business, like life is all about relationships. Respectful, considerate and thoughtful behavior fosters happier, less stressful and therefore more positive human interactions in all settings, irrespective of geographic location, race, status or religious persuasion. A study of incivility in the American workplace by Christine Porath and Christine Pearson published in 2009, revealed that widespread incivility reduces employee productivity due to anxiety, distraction, low morale, absenteeism, and decreased commitment and loyalty. Their research discovered that employees did not perform as well, were less creative and became more dysfunctional and aggressive when someone was rude to them. In a recent article, Christine Pearson notes that job stress in the USA accounts for \$300 billion in losses. The bottom line is that companies lose good employees while profits decline as a result.

A large, diverse sample of managers and employees across the USA polled by Porath and Pearson revealed the pervasiveness of the decline in workplace performance due to incivility. The startling results are listed below.

- 48% intentionally decreased work effort
- 47% intentionally decreased time at work
- 38% intentionally decreased work quality
- 80% lost work time worrying about the incident
- 63% lost time avoiding the offender
- 66% respondents said their performance declined
- 78% said their commitment to the organization declined



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Similar findings were reported in the *Baltimore Workplace Civility Study* led by Dr. Forni and published in 2003. The impact of incivility in the workplace does not end with decreased workplace performance. Disrespectful and irresponsible organizational behavior and communication, inappropriate employee appearance and body language have a ripple effect that can quickly determine public perception of corporate image and brand. The impact of instant communication through blogging, social media, YouTube and other Internet-based applications has become crucial to the success or failure of corporations and individual careers. Malicious or frivolous acts by dissatisfied customers or employees who are targets or perpetrators of incivility can instantly impact image and brand with a costly outcome. In our fast-paced, high-tech, brand-conscious world, image has become a precious commodity and can be destroyed instantly. The fall from grace experienced by former New York governor Eliot Spitzer, the financial debacle surrounding US corporate energy giant Enron, and the alleged transgressions of golf super star Tiger Woods are just a few examples. In each case, not only were huge financial losses at stake, but also a betrayal of public trust that undermines confidence and ultimately affects consumer choice. By contrast, the world-renowned customer service excellence of Nordstrom's department stores and the warm, family-friendly feeling for which companies like IKEA and Discover Communications are known and loved, help shape the positive image and brand of these high profile corporations.

EMBRACING CIVILITY – CREATING CHANGE AND TRANSFORMATION

With education, training and coaching, individuals, organizations, companies, schools, communities, and even countries can learn to embrace the civility principles of Respect, Responsibility and Restraint and demonstrate ethical and considerate conduct in their internal and external relationships. Genuine commitment and daily practice can help bring about the change and transformation needed to be more civil in the way we treat each other inside and outside the workplace and in how we care for our planet. As Dr. Gonthier reiterates

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throughout her book *Rude Awakenings*, each person has the personal responsibility to make civility occur, be it in his or her place of work, family, school or community. Small acts such as saying good morning, hold-



ing the door, turning off cell phones and avoid texting on PDAs, such as BlackBerry® and iPhone®, while in a meeting, promptly replying to e-mails, ignoring gossip, being punctual, acknowledging others, supporting and nurturing a colleague, offering a sincere apology or just smiling – all can go a long way towards making the world a happier, more peaceful and therefore a better place to live, work and play. Individuals, companies, organizations and countries can reshape their image and brand from the inside out by practicing the civility principles and rules of conduct. This is a worthy investment in social capital that buys insurance against the pitfalls of disrespectful and irresponsible behavior and guarantees a positive return. These principles reflect time-proven core values and standards of behavior such as integrity, honesty, respect, philanthropy and leadership that elevate and fortify the character of individuals and organizations. Repeated, consistent actions will result in harmonious, healthy and happy relationships.

As experts in Appearance, Behavior and Communication related to personal and corporate image and brand management, image consultants are well positioned to influence and shape the transformation necessary to promote civility in the workplace, schools, communities and leadership settings. Image consultants have a broad range of expertise and are professional educators, trainers, business coaches, leaders, project managers, professional speakers, program developers and writers. Image experts are dedicated to helping



Civility Counts – An Image Perspective

individuals, companies and organizations create a more positive impression and increase their confidence, credibility and worth. Many are professionals credentialed in etiquette, civility, protocol, personal branding, professional development, self-esteem, behavioral styles, body language, communication, and other areas as shown in Table 1 below. With proven skills honed through experience and rigorous professional certification, image consultants are armed with the tools and expertise needed to bring solutions to the settings where incivility reigns.

Table 1 – The Defining Elements of Image

APPEARANCE	BEHAVIOR	COMMUNICATION
Grooming Wardrobe Management Color Analysis	Cultural Competence Self-image Etiquette Body Language Leadership Political Protocol Self-esteem	Branding Coaching/Training Communications (Business, Interpersonal, Nonverbal) Media Training Networking

For more than 20 years, AICI has been the global leader in the field of personal and corporate image consulting with members in more than 40 countries. AICI is the world’s largest organization of image professionals who steadfastly promote the importance of creating a positive image, as brand expressed through appearance, behavior and communication. With its rigorous, three-tiered certification system and unparalleled training and professional development programs, AICI is dedicated to raising the bar of professionalism in the industry and recognizing performance excellence. AICI is known throughout the world because of its focus on education, excellence and experience.



Civility Counts – An Image Perspective

CIVILITY IN ACTION

Inspired by the work of Dr. Forni, AICI launched the Civility Counts Project in May 2009 at its Annual Conference in Irvine, California. To this end, AICI has embarked on a global initiative to promote public awareness about the meaning of civility and to educate people everywhere on how it applies to their everyday lives. The AICI Civility Counts Project aims to spread a positive Civility Epidemic that will help create a world in which people from all walks of life practice kindness, consideration, thoughtfulness, respect, self restraint, and responsibility. The following are examples of AICI education, training and philanthropic projects to promote and demonstrate civility in action around the world. These initiatives and programs can be modeled and emulated in the workplace, institutions and communities.

AICI GLOBAL CIVILITY INITIATIVES AND PROGRAMS

- Civility Counts Project (Approved by AICI Board, August, 2008)
- Code of Civility for Image Consultants
- Civility Member Survey
- Civility Counts Webinar
- Civility White Paper
- AICI Civility Ambassadors
- IMMIE* Bravo Award presented to Dr. P.M. Forni at the 2009 AICI Annual Conference

*Image Makers Merit of Industry Excellence



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- Civility training seminars presented at 2009 and 2010 AICI Annual Conference
- AICI “Gives Back” Philanthropic Project
- AICI Cares and Shares – Remembering Haiti and Chile – 2010 Annual Conference
- International Civility Awareness Month Proclamation Project
- AICI Civility Star Award

The 20th century culminated with heightened global awareness about the power of image and branding, renewed interest in the values that support a positive sense of worth, and it ushered in the new relationship economy. Consequently, there is a demand for credentialed, competent trainers, educators and presenters with expertise in interpersonal/life skills which include civility, image, etiquette, protocol, personal appearance, body language, grooming and visual impact. This is crucial for survival and gaining competitive advantage in the highly competitive global 21st century economy. AICI image consultants who are trained and certified in these disciplines can address this growing need by providing training and education programs, presentations, coaching, consulting and literature sources. Many consultants also sponsor or collaborate on philanthropic projects that demonstrate civility in action.

STEPS TO EMBRACING CIVILITY – FIVE FOCUS AREAS

The decision to embrace civility in an organization should begin with an internal needs assessment to determine the level of knowledge, awareness and relevant cultural perspectives among stakeholders. This could be accomplished through surveys, focus groups or other research methods. The result will help shape the development of training and education programs,



Civility Counts – An Image Perspective

policy, awareness campaigns and a publicity strategy that promote respectful behavior, communication and appearance. The following are five areas around which resulting policies and programs could be centered. AICI's talent pool includes professionals certified and experienced in all five areas. Many are world-renowned experts in their fields.

- 1. Image and Branding**
- 2. Civility and Ethics**
- 3. Business Etiquette and Protocol**
- 4. Dress for Success**
- 5. Philanthropy**

Training and programs in these areas help employees and professionals develop skills that will enhance their performance and sense of worth. The result is increased value to their lives, careers and the organization. As experts who understand the power of impressions created through Appearance, Behavior and Communication, image consultants are uniquely positioned to offer training, presentations and programs in image and branding. Many image consultants are certified in image and brand management and have proven track records. Service is a core value of many successful organizations, and philanthropy through civic engagement is an effective way to embrace civility. The AICI "Gives Back" global philanthropic initiative is a model that can be adapted for companies and organizations wishing to embrace the spirit of civility through giving and sharing. The program includes a toolkit and suggestions for philanthropic projects. The *AICI Image and Disabilities Project* is one example of embracing civility through philanthropy. This collaborative global initiative focuses on image consulting services provided by AICI members in support of the disabled.

CONCLUSION

There is overwhelming agreement that civility, though on the decline globally, is important for promoting peaceful co-existence and stimulating human growth and development based on respectful, responsible behavior. Research studies conclude that the impact of incivility in the workplace undermines productivity, public trust, affects consumer choice and ultimately diminishes profitability. The image and civility model shows that a positive image and healthy relationships are at the center of where ethical and considerate conduct overlap with aspects of Appearance, Behavior and Communication. These include body language, grooming, workplace attire, branding, self-esteem, etiquette, media, coaching, leadership and networking. With education, training and awareness, everyone can learn or be sensitized to take even small steps to embrace civility in their lives that would improve human interactions in personal and business settings. Certified image consultants can provide expertise in etiquette, civility, protocol, image and brand management to help address this need. Businesses, organizations and individuals must first be aware of the need for and be prepared to embrace the change that can create more civility in the world.





Civility Counts – An Image Perspective

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