



A Road Warrior's Observations on Responsibility, Civility, Mentorship, and Being a Leader

Insights

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Measles and Personal Responsibility

I'm a conservative free market, individual rights oriented, gun owning, evangelical leaning person who grew up in the hills of North Georgia. I deal with the Federal and State government every day and I believe that private organizations can better handle many government tasks. Have I established my credentials so that I can make the following statement?

Public Health authorities are correct about the need for the measles vaccination and an individual behaves irresponsibly in not getting their child vaccinated unless there is clear medical reason to not do so.

While the CDC and Federal government's response to various infectious disease has sometimes been slow and inefficient, I have seen no reason to discount the public health establishment's pronouncements on the safety of vaccinations for flu, measles and many other diseases. The internet allows discredited theories and false science to live forever. They may sound reasonable, but at some point, one has to trust medical professionals. When I go under anesthesia, my last words to my doc will not be last minute instructions substituting my judgment for that of my surgeon.

I propose that as part of their **wellness efforts**, employers "aggressively" educate employees and their families about the importance of vaccinations, and one's responsibility to others. Perhaps employers can then avoid later legal problems presented by measles exposure in the workplace.

The Continued Demise of Civility

While I'm on the subject of one's responsibility to others, let's talk about civility. As I flew back to Atlanta late Friday night, due to flight delays, the couple next to me was going to have little time to run through four concourses to make their flight to Johannesburg. I'm flown that 17 hour nonstop and knew that the couple might be stranded for days if they missed their flight. As we taxied to the terminal, the attendant announced that some passengers on board had tight international connections. She asked people to stay seated if Atlanta was their final destination.

We were on the 28th row. Guess how many passengers in front of us stayed seated Not one, and the majority of them were not connecting with other flights.

Ok.I'm complaining about a minor problem.Or is it?How many workplace conflicts and legal problems are caused by people only caring about themselves?With many people, it's obliviousness.Others don't care.And let's not raise the subject of rude drivers.**Do you think that modelling civility and a concern for others might improve your workplace and your bottom line?**

- The NLRB routinely finds rules mandating civility and professionalism or prohibiting gossip to be unlawful, so perhaps the best way to develop civility, courtesy and professionalism is to teach employees and managers to think about how they can be civil in their everyday lives.
- We teach home safety to employees as a means of encouraging a safe mindset when they're working, so why not apply this principal to civility?
- Give examples, model this behavior yourself, and see what happens.Tie the concept in with no harassment training.Instead of focusing on "what not to do" in harassment training, emphasize good conduct as well. Just a thought

Real Mentoring

I've been blessed to have been mentored by people who deserve credit for my good characteristics and successes, and no blame for my admitted failings.First, my mom and dad raised me in their small businesses and taught me many of the skills on which I now rely.When I was in high school, Wayne King and Steve Miller treated me like an adult and turned me around spiritually, athletically and academically.Judge Jack Langford, my senior scoutmaster when he and I worked with inner city scouts taught me how to be a dad by how he handled those teens.

As to the practice of law, my mentors were Carlos Smith, and at Fisher Phillips, Don Wright and Reg Bell.In addition to teaching me the practical down and dirty skills of traditional labor law, Reg Bell demonstrated what it was to be a man.Reg wasn't prone to sugar coating and did not tolerate fools, but I've never had a tougher defender when I was in the right.Don Wright hired me, and after I became a partner, he became one of my closest friends.We'll soon celebrate his 50 years with the Firm.Don taught me commonsense client management, but more importantly, he modelled being a father and behaving with grace and honor in difficult personal situations.My kids refer to Don as "uncle Don."He warrants a separate post later this year.

But today, I want to thank Carlos Smith, an attorney who supervised me for two summers of law clerking and has remained influential in my life even though I joined another law firm.Whenever we get together, no matter how long since we last saw one another, we pick up where left off.I can obtain objective input on client or firm management issues.But more importantly, Carlos has modelled or advised me on many other matters. I'll share an example.As we ate lunch on Friday, Carlos asked me when I was leaving the conference.I told him that I was leaving a bit early so that I could take my wife to a late dinner because she had again held the fort during five days of my travel.Carlos pondered my comment for a moment, and then explained that his wife had died last fall and that he now realized how many daily things she managed so that Carlos could succeed as an attorney.I told Carlos that I hated to turn the subject to me, but that I had needed to hear that

message

message.

When we returned to the conference, I sent an email to my wife, who works full time and had an unusually busy week. I acknowledged that I often took for granted her management of darned near everything else so that I could concentrate on work and on being a dad. When I arrived home to encounter a frazzled and understandably grumpy spouse, I didn't get angry, I tried to be a good husband. Do you think my should-have-been common sense actions allow me to better focus on taking care of my clients? Absolutely!

The reason I share this message in a professional blog is that one of the reasons that employers have so many legal challenges is that they are not "purposeful" in their "human capital efforts," be it developing supervisors and managers, creating a safe culture or establishing a workplace where employees don't need unions. Yes. We're all doing more with less, and we're inundated with data, but that doesn't excuse us.

- None of the above essential goals will be met without a specific business plan and regular reviews of one's progress.
- We correctly focus on mentoring as part of our efforts to improve minority participation but often pay lip service to doing so in everyday work.
- Character and effectiveness at work are inextricably connected. Mentoring focuses on developing the entire person.
- What legacy do you want to leave at work?

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