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# Convicted Civility vs. Interpersonal Rancor

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Cultural norms are what drive the interpersonal relationships and behaviors within any organization? the family, the church, the company and the government. The evidence on TV, in the newspapers and on the Internet verifies that a cultural war is raging in many of America's homes, churches, companies and governmental agencies. I call it the war between Convicted Civility vs. Interpersonal Rancor. Winning this war on the side of civility is critical because civility is critical to gaining and maintaining our nation's cultural harmony and interpersonal integrity. I believe it will be proactive owners and leaders within companies across America who willingly pick up the challenge and lead the charge that will turn our society toward winning this war.

Presently, interpersonal conflicts are leading to excessive rancor, personal politics, deceit and even fraud and murder! These conflicts are ripping apart whatever harmony remains in our American culture?in our homes, in the workplace and among those who are supposed to be serving and governing us. Just do your own web searches on "family, church, company and governmental conflict and you will find more problems triggered by interpersonal rancor to read about than your stomach can probably stand.

Breakdowns in personal and operational integrity are costing Americans mental and emotional stress, interpersonal divisiveness, operational ineffectiveness and unnecessary financial losses and waste.

However, there is hope. There is an interpersonal relationship concept that is providing a powerful focus for helping people better hear and respond to one another rather than alienate one another with rancorous and deceitful behavior. It is called Convicted Civility.

Given the escalating polarization and divisiveness taking place across America, it is not surprising that few of us understand that a person can have, and live, deeply held values and engage in civil dialogue about community, national and world problems and opportunities. People who understand and embrace the principles of Convicted Civility can even venture into areas of great contention within their homes, churches and workplaces. It is not surprising that so few do, because in this day and age of polarized and rancorous public debate, there seems little willingness to achieve a principle-based middle ground or for manifesting interpersonal civility.

To best describe the nature of the conversation between two or more people who dialogue with a heart and mind focused on the concept of Convicted Civility, consider these excerpts from the work of Richard Mouw in his call for "convicted civility." Mouw, in his book *Uncommon Decency*, quotes theologian Martin Marty: "One of the real problems in modern life is that the people who are good at being civil often lack strong convictions and people who have strong convictions often lack civility." Mouw says we need both a civil outlook and a "passionate

intensity" about our convictions; thus, a "convicted civility."

Mouw bemoans the fact that today "civility" is equated with being a pushover. "But," writes Mouw, "in the past civility was understood in much richer terms. To be civil was to genuinely care about the larger society. It required a heartfelt commitment to your fellow-citizens. It was a willingness to promote the well-being of people who were very different, including people who seriously disagreed with you on important matters. Civility wasn't merely an external show of politeness. It included an inner politeness as well" (pp.12-13).

What would the "harmony quotient" within a home, church, business or governmental agency register if all persons within each of these social institutions intentionally encouraged one another to make the choice to foster convicted civility? Each person could have the option of engaging in spirited conversation, advocacy and persuasion rather than argument, rancorous debate, political manipulation or worse. Everyone in an intact group has the option to display Convicted Civility with the "inner politeness and patience" which enhances trust and builds more collaborative and cooperative relationships. People can intentionally compare other's best with their own best. They can intentionally be gentle when they dialogue about differences and help one another discern those differences clearly. They can surface and celebrate similarities in values and views. They can decide to not be quick to offend or be offended.

The best way I've found to help an intact group of people intentionally enhance their abilities to display Convicted Civility is when they come to agreement on two things: A set of governing operating values; and, a mutual accountability process that helps all stakeholders consistently manifest those values as they relate to others and work with them.

Here is a "bakers dozen" of a few governing operating values that have proven to foster trust, rapport and civility among intact groups of people. I urge you to make a resolution to intentionally foster Convicted Civility by modeling it and encouraging others to join you in doing so by living out the interpersonal operating values below.

1. Demonstrate HONESTY by telling the truth and taking only what is rightfully yours.
2. Demonstrate PATIENCE when interacting with others.
3. Express KINDNESS toward others.
4. Demonstrate GRACIOUSNESS in dealing with others.
5. Serve others with a HUMBLE spirit.
6. Demonstrate POLITENESS in word and deed toward one another.
7. Express CALM UNDERSTANDING in dealing with conflict between self and others.
8. Show delight in promoting JUSTICE for everyone.
9. Reach out to FORGIVE other's mistakes and faults.
10. Show TRUST in others.
11. Demonstrate HOPE when facing difficult situations.
12. Show that you EXPECT THE BEST from others.
13. Manifest GOOD WILL in word and deed toward others.

Building a company culture where people value and opt for expressing convicted civility over interpersonal rancor calls for careful planning, interpersonal skills assessment and facilitation of needed interpersonal skills development programs.

I've believe the ideal approach to establishing convicted civility as a company operating norm is to first share the concept with everyone in the company to "test the water." If there is positive interest and people have a good sense of the benefits, then form a planning committee made up of a cross section of representatives from all departments and position levels. Commission them to work with a professional business coach to develop together a plan to make this transition and provide the skills training necessary for it to be successful.

Will the leaders of your company courageously pick up the challenge and lead the charge toward helping win the war between convicted civility and interpersonal rancor? What say you?

If you need help in mastering and implementing any of the skills and tactics mentioned, I'm here for you! Please visit the Call-A-Coach section of my web site for more information.

## About the author:

Dr. Mac shares with business owners the practical knowledge and insights he gained as a small company CEO. He founded Sycamore Ranch, Inc. when 27 and as CEO led his partners and a staff of 100 for 16 years in developing and operating the 50 acre recreational facility. Years later, he integrated what he learned from his Doctoral program at USC with his practical business experiences and began consulting. For four decades Mac's coached business owners in mastering and applying "how to" leadership and managerial skills for: Hiring and retaining only the top ten percent producers; Optimally deploying and supervising staff to maximize their personal motivation; Developing high integrity leadership teams; Facilitating mutual performance accountability and peer coaching processes; and, Integrating his Intentional Business Integrity Process into their company operations. Mac has served leaders in manufacturing and high tech companies; accounting, banking and insurance enterprises; medical and health care organizations; service and retail oriented businesses; as well as educational, governmental and non profit organizations. Q&A ProActive Leadership 888-648-5552 or MacAdam@PALConsulting

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