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IN THIS PAPER:

Introduction:
The Transformational
Power of Respect

Definition of Respect

The Challenge

We Can't Fix What We
Don't Know Is Broken

12 Rules of Respect

Self-Esteem: The
Importance of
Respecting Others

Summary

Author Biography

The Respect Effect:

Leveraging Culture, Emotions & Neuroscience to Build a Better Business

By: Paul Meshanko, Founder & President, Legacy Business Cultures

INTRODUCTION

In his new book, *The Respect Effect: Leveraging Culture, Emotions and Neuroscience to Build a Better Business*,

Paul Meshanko reveals the transformational power of respect in the workplace. Through a combination of unintentional or purposeful ignorance, at times we inadvertently treat others with disrespect. The resulting costs to organizations in litigation, low productivity, lack of employee engagement and trust in company leaders are staggering.

By examining the neurology of human interaction, Meshanko explains how each of our brains is profoundly influenced by how we're treated by others. When we're treated with respect, our brains literally light up and perform at their highest levels. When treated with disrespect, the higher thought processes in our brains go dormant. Hijacked by our primitive survival wiring, we become diminished assets to our employers and organizations.

The Respect Effect is a refreshing and powerful addition to the arsenal of tools organizational leaders need to successfully guide companies and manage change. When leaders are able to create work

environments that consistently value, esteem and nurture employees, they increase employee engagement.

Simply stated, engaged employees become emotionally committed to the success of their organizations and are more likely to give their highest levels of performance.

In contrast, disrespectful work environments result in a marked decrease in production coupled with unhappy workers who show up merely to collect a paycheck. Meshanko makes a compelling case for the value of respect and why it's important that the transition to a more civil work environment start with the company leader.

Through real-life examples and case studies (though, in some cases, the names have been changed to protect the guilty), Meshanko illustrates how respectful and disrespectful organizations function. The book has the bonus of providing information that's not restricted to the workplace. The principles of respect apply to every facet of people's lives and provide the rare opportunity to positively transform our culture.

THE CHALLENGE

According to data from the American Bar Association, in 2011 U.S. corporations paid \$455 million in fines for various

Definition of Respect:

Respect is an active process of non-judgmentally engaging people from all backgrounds. It is practiced to increase our awareness and effectiveness, and demonstrated in a manner that esteems both us and those with whom we interact.

Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) violations. When combined with settlements paid out of court, attorney's fees, time and other expenses, estimates put the amount that U.S. businesses spend at over \$2 billion to settle claims of disrespectful, and typically unlawful, behavior. You don't have to be a finance major to be impressed by the potential cost of disrespect, either individual or systemic. When you add low productivity, absenteeism and high

employee turnover to the monetary mix, company leaders have a real problem.

The greater the authority a person has in an organization, the more damage they can do.

A single act of disrespect can have profound consequences. It can devastate a relationship that took years to build, with the primary casualty often being trust. Damaging behaviors can include, among others, stereotyping, verbal taunting, gossiping, dishonesty and public humiliation. Meshanko points out that the greater the authority a person has in an organization, the more damage they can do. For those employed in a workplace where hostile behaviors are openly tolerated



or even encouraged, there is no doubt the damage such behaviors cause to work productivity. Energy spent perpetrating or deflecting hostility is energy that can't be spent doing the work individuals are hired to do.

Classroom training and follow-up are an important component to cultivating respectful workplaces, and these efforts need to be reinforced. Meshanko empowers readers by providing an amazingly simple and logical addition. When leaders have the power to influence their employee's levels of engagement and esteem through their own actions, the resulting changes are more permanent. By taking the focus off diversity as solely a workplace training issue, change is inspired and led through behaviors that can be applied to every aspect of our lives.

WE CAN'T FIX WHAT WE DON'T KNOW IS BROKEN

We can't fix what we don't know is broken, and for most of us, that includes the scope of awareness required to treat others with respect. *The Respect Effect* is exceptional in explaining why humans act the way they do based on our primitive wiring. Our brains create

a unique blueprint of how we see the world, those around us and ourselves. The result is that we tend to treat people based on our past experiences with people “like” them. What we feel when we are around people determines how we act even if we aren’t conscious of the reasons for our behavior. By understanding what happens psychologically and physically when we are treated with respect or disrespect, we become aware of ourselves in a way that makes us open to change.

Ten years from now people aren't going to remember the exact things you did, how late you worked or what you said at a staff meeting. What they will remember is how they felt when they were around you.

One of the most important benefits created by respectful leaders is trust. Trust leads to the perception of safety, and the feeling of safety helps free organizational potential. Even when the outside environment is in flux from the economy, changing technology or competition, trust that co-workers and leaders look out for each other and are truthful creates a stability that will survive external pressures. Meshanko cites the example of one company that emerged from the recent economic downturn with the enthusiasm and commitment of its employees largely intact. How did they do it? Throughout the economic downturn, the company kept their employees fully informed of their financial situation. When employees were let go, everyone understood why. The remaining workers stayed engaged by doing odd jobs around the plant in preparation for when business improved. Doing the “right thing” led to an astounding degree of loyalty, trust and enthusiasm on the part of the remaining employees. When orders did increase, the company was in the best position to move forward. Employees felt valued because confidential information on the company had been openly and freely shared. They became vested in the future success of the company.

In a workforce that increasingly reflects the demographic differences within the population, getting people from dissimilar age, gender and ethnic backgrounds to work together can be a challenge. People who are different from each other (race, age, social values, etc.) can work through prejudices and be coaxed into working collaboratively under the right conditions.

What’s most important for this principle to work is:

- **All substantial sources of conflict be dealt with or removed.**
- **All individuals have equal power, stature and privileges.**
- **The members of the overall group be given a task which can’t be accomplished successfully unless all members work together.**
- **The environment in which the contact takes place is neutral and conducive to positive, friendly interactions.**

THE 12 RULES OF RESPECT

Meshanko presents **12 Rules of Respect** that make surprisingly good sense. Examples illustrate and explain the dynamics taking place when we interact with people, and the reader is challenged to be curious about the perspectives of others. The 12 Rules of Respect are coupled with information on behavior change.

12 Rules of Respect

1. *Be aware of our non-verbal and extra-verbal cues.*
2. *Develop curiosity for the perspective of others.*
3. *Assume that everyone is smart about something.*
4. *Become a better listener by shaking our “but”.*

5. *Look for opportunities to connect with and support others.*
6. *Explain why we disagree, when we do.*
7. *Admit where we need to personally grow, stretch and change.*
8. *Learn to be wrong on occasion.*
9. *Never hesitate to say we're sorry.*
10. *Intentionally engage others in ways that build their self-esteem.*
11. *Be respectful of time when making comments.*
12. *Smile!*

The behavior patterns we use most often are the ones our brains are most skilled and efficient at using, even if they're not the ones we desire. Our brains prefer to stick with tasks and behaviors that can be successfully performed with the least amount of effort.

HOW CAN WE ACHIEVE LASTING CHANGE?

The simple answer is practice. When we practice something new, especially when it's driven by motivation to improve, we get better. The trick is to stick with the new behaviors long enough that the brain becomes comfortable and proficient with them. This is an area where a company leader has an amazing potential to lead through example.

SELF-ESTEEM: THE IMPORTANCE OF RESPECTING OURSELVES

It's almost impossible to treat others with respect on a consistent basis unless we respect ourselves first. Physical vitality, stress and how we feel about ourselves all play a role in determining our capacity for treating others with respect. A healthy self-esteem frees up valuable energy for building mutually respectful relationships.

Self-esteem is the degree to which individuals feel comfortable with themselves as they are, believe that they have inherent value as individuals, and demonstrate confidence in their ability to successfully achieve their own measure of success.

Healthy self-esteem supports a board range of attitudes and behaviors that are individually and organizationally beneficial. A few examples include:

- **Being more receptive to new ideas and other people's approaches.**
- **Respectfully sharing opinions that may run counter to the majority.**
- **Constructively managing criticism and feedback from others.**

Individuals with unhealthy self-esteem are more prone to perceptions, attitudes and behaviors that hinder their performance and often harm others. They may act in ways that reflect their own low sense of worth or in aggressive ways that attempt to make themselves feel superior to others. To aid the reader, eight helpful steps are provided for building respect for ourselves.

The Respect Effect concludes with a blueprint for respectful organizations, including three recommended paths consisting of mapping, the invitation and cultivation. Meshanko emphasizes that respect does not mean always agreeing with others. On the contrary, respectful organizations not only encourage but require the healthy exchange of different ideas. On a final note, mistakes will happen. The good news is that the cultural norms that resonate best for most people tend to be enduring. Some values and their associated behaviors simply lead to stronger, smarter and more adaptable organizations.

SUMMARY

A commitment to a respectful workplace becomes part of the fabric of an organization's culture. The

"If you have some respect for people as they are, you can be more effective in helping them to become better than they are."

— John W. Gardner

greatest leverage to shape and influence culture is at the top of an organization. *The Respect Effect* shows leaders how to create, through example, environments where respect and workplace

civility are routinely practiced. The results are a more engaged, creative and productive workforce with a reduction in EEOC litigation, absenteeism and turnover.

How we engage others leaves a lasting impression. The question to ask ourselves is how do we want to be remembered? More importantly, what are we willing to do to start responsibly building our legacy of respect today?

Knowing how to leverage culture, emotion and neuroscience to improve workplace engagement and productivity is the winning combination leaders are looking for to move their organizations forward. *The Respect Effect* successfully delivers these tools to the doorsteps of corporations worldwide.

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

Paul Meshanko
Founder & President, Legacy Business Cultures

Paul Meshanko is an author, professional speaker and business leader with over 20 years of experience in corporate training and organizational culture change. After a 12-year career with AlliedSignal, he opened EdgeOhio in 1997 to serve the region's

growing demand for change management and employee engagement training. Under his leadership, the business has grown to become one of the Midwest's most successful staff development employee survey providers, employing a full-time staff of six associates and a network of over a dozen strategic partners. In October 2011, Paul and his team renamed the company *Legacy Business Cultures* to better reflect the firm's core value proposition and its increasingly broad client base.

As a presenter and trainer, Paul has captivated over a quarter million leaders and business professionals on five continents. His training materials have been translated into over 25 languages and his newsletter is read by thousands of subscribers each month. His clients have included The Cleveland Clinic, DuPont, Parker Hannifin, BASF, Progressive Insurance, MTD, Symantec, McGraw-Hill, Toyota, The U.S. EPA and Ernst & Young. Always with any eye toward research and science, his speaking themes include organizational and personal resilience, work-life balance, employee engagement and respectful work cultures.



Paul holds a BSBA from The Ohio State University and a Masters in Business Administration from Baldwin Wallace College. He is an active member of the *Human Resources Planning Society* and *Society for Human Resource Management*,

and serves on the Board of Directors for the Boys & Girls Clubs of Cleveland. His first book, *Conversations on Success*, was released in May 2006 and his second, *The Respect Effect*, is due to be released in 2012.