CHAPTER 3

Changing Workplace Culture

A corporation is a living organism; it has to continue to shed its skin. Methods have to change. Focus has to change. Values have to change. The sum of those changes is transformation.

—Andrew Grove

As discussed in Chapter 1, there are those in the manufacturing industry who would argue that the **workplace culture** "is what it is." They might suggest that the work gets done, and that command and control management achieves, and sometimes surpasses, the organizational goals. The fact is, the industry has survived for a long time, changing when necessary, in terms of technology, and regulations, and even safety. There have been quality improvements and the industry thrives in many countries around the world.

The conversation is no different than in other sectors when there is resistance to change—those who are comfortable with how it has always been done, stay, and those who don't like the culture find their way out of it, one way or another.

For the purposes of this book, our focus is not on changing processes specifically—unless those processes tie into workplace communication. Our focus will be sharing strategies for building trust, engaging in civil communication, encouraging collaboration, fostering information sharing, embedding a culture of learning, and increasing morale. Our field experience suggests that these factors have a significant impact on employees' overall experience in the workplace.

Still, for the record, we do know from the research (e.g., Weber Shadwick) that when an organization can incorporate civility as best practice, including embedding it in aspects of policy, procedure, and process as well as in communication protocols, and when leaders adopt the mindset that civility in and of itself is a **continuous improvement** strategy, organizations can experience additional, and measurable, improvements to retention, engagement, and to productivity, among other metrics.

So, what do we mean by "workplace culture"? There are many theories and definitions about what workplace culture is but we (Bayer & Masotti) define workplace culture as "the habits, traditions, attitudes, tone of interactions, and general behaviors that make up employees' day-to-day experience." An individual experiences workplace culture by living in the workplace. And because we typically interact with, and impact, those we work with, the people living in an organization co-create the workplace culture.

When we understand workplace culture in this way, it is easy to also understand how, in the words of Scott Peck, in *A World Waiting to be Born*, that genuine "civility is part consciously motivated organizational behaviour." Scott suggests that this is because civility has to do with how we relate to each other, and whenever there is a relationship between two or more people, an organization of some sort is involved. In manufacturing this is true; for example, production teams might interact with supervisors and union representatives (an organization) who in turn interact with managers who may interact with a regulating body (an organization) or with a supplier (an organization) or with a customer (an organization) and so on.

One of the mistakes many organizations make when they set out to change workplace culture, especially if the focus is on people treatment, is thinking short-term. Often when people behave badly, training is identified as the solution, for example, teach people how to communicate, or offer **respectful workplace** or **emotional intelligence** and managing conflict and diversity training. In some cases, there might be some positive impact of these training solutions but frequently there is not. The reasons training in and of itself is not enough to change workplace culture are:

- The specific skills, knowledge, and abilities needed are not properly assessed; e.g., the work team is simply sent to and required to attend all generic training.

- The employees often do not understand why they are attending training and they don't know what they are expected to do with what they learn—*if* they learn something.
- The training is not linked to goals, policy, procedure, etc.
- There is no follow-up or evaluation—no testing, rewards, or consequences for doing anything (or nothing) with the learning.

This is why civility training is usually only effective when it is one part of a bigger change initiative.

What is a **change initiative?** As presented in Chapter 2, building a culture of civility in a manufacturing organization where what we may perceive as a toxic culture has prevailed for, in some cases, a hundred years, might be a difficult endeavor. It's not going to be easy to change the workplace culture, and it is likely not going to happen quickly. As such, this type of change is best handled as a change initiative. To be successful, leaders and organizations must understand and acknowledge that there is more to civility as a continuous improvement strategy than simply offering civility training.

A change initiative is usually a companywide mandate that supports changes required to meet organizational goals. Change isn't easy.

IMPORTANT: Gallup polls assert that 70 percent of all change initiatives fail because change agents overlook the role frontline supervisors and managers play in the success of the initiative. They also claim that HR professionals fail to develop in frontline managers the exact skills and actions they need to take to make the changes happen.

Other reasons why change initiatives fail include:

- The lack of a clearly communicated strategy to stakeholders such as employees and customers
- The lack of support and buy-in by key organizational leaders; even if the change initiative is small in scope, senior leaders must be aware of it, understand why it is important to the organization as a whole, and "own" it as if the decision is in the best interests of their own employees.
- Senior leaders' failure to understand the change initiative's relevance and the failure to measure the change initiative's progress
- The lack of sufficient technology to implement and sustain the change initiative

- The lack of positive and transparent reinforcement
- A lack of understanding about how the change will actually impact employees,[1] and the resulting organizational behaviour

Organizational behaviour is the study of how human beings behave in organizations. This field of study in the broadest sense covers most of human psychology, since human behavior occurs in the context of one or more organizations.

For Consideration: Civility Indicators Iceberg

The nuances and rationale for various aspects of workplace culture are not always obvious, and so in order to change workplace culture you have to look beyond what you can see and hear. One way of looking at workplace culture is imagining an iceberg. Over the course of a typical day, we observe or experience what is on the surface—the tip of the iceberg.

As a point of interest, the civility indicator iceberg is an adaptation of the original iceberg model, also called the **theory of omission** by Ernest Hemingway. The theory is that we cannot see or detect most of a situation's data. Hemingway used the model in his writing in that he deliberately only wrote about the "surface" of a scenario. Hemingway was a skilled enough writer that the reader speculated or devised what was under the surface. He intentionally wrote so that what was beneath the surface was implicit. The model is now frequently used in understanding systems and in problem-solving.

Consider again, the "tip of the iceberg" in a workplace. As depicted in the civility indicator iceberg graphic, we can see:

- How people dress
- How people interact, including with whom, and how
- The tone of communications, e.g., harsh, or friendly

[1]UNC Executive Development. November 12, 2015. "Why Change Initiatives Fail," *Executive Development Blog*. http://execdev.kenan-flagler.unc.edu/blog/why-change-initiatives-fail#:~:text=The%20lack%20of%20sufficient%20technology,change%20will%20actually%20impact%20employees, (accessed August 14, 2020).

- What cliques or clusters or hierarchy exist
- What the people who work in the organization do, e.g., tasks, roles
- Who the people who work in an organization are, e.g., age, race, gender, education, experience, language
- What gets done, e.g., errors, production, safety measures
- The general demeanor or mood of the workplace, e.g., stressful, happy, supportive, etc.
- Overall standards, e.g., is the workplace clean, organized, structured
- Other

The problem with only seeing what is above the surface is that this purview rarely helps us understand WHY things are the way they are above the surface. When we look below the surface, we can begin to understand factors that influence, direct, or dictate what happens day-to-day. For example:

- Legislation/regulation
- Organizational policy
- Process and procedures
- Financial situation, e.g., resources for repairs or training
- External conditions, e.g., recession
- Demographics, e.g., labor pool
- Competencies, e.g., of leadership team
- Stakeholder interests, e.g., union
- Compliance expectations
- History, e.g., no competitors, no enforcement of safety standards, poor quality control
- Habits, history, and patterns in terms of hierarchy, communication expectations, and approach
- Relationships and power distribution
- Management style/approach
- Other, e.g., the trends, world events, discoveries, inventions, and other influences that impact our world and how we work every day

The reality is that long-standing policies and practices, sometimes even processes and procedures, can actually encourage incivility. While these processes may seem logical or can be rationalized as necessary due to

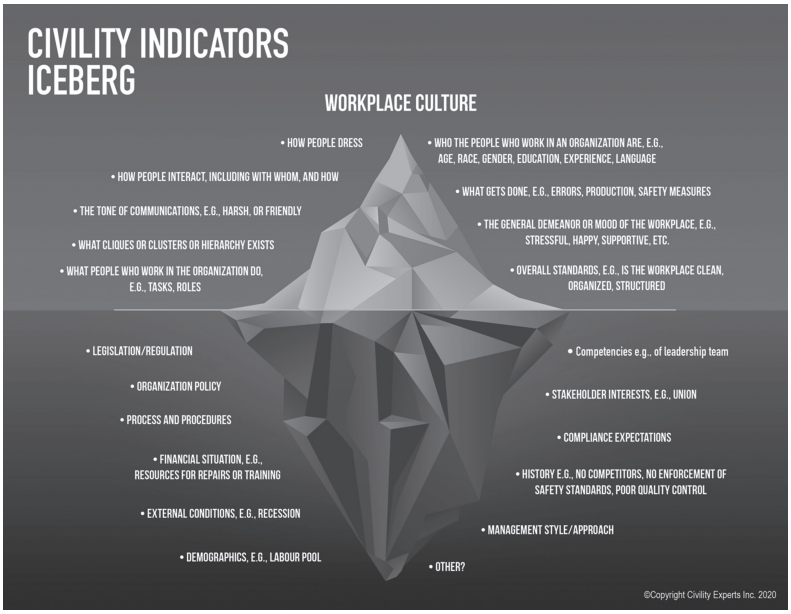

Figure 4 Civility Indicators Iceberg©, Civility Experts Inc. 2018

financial priorities and other reasons, the impact relative to **"people treatment"** and the overall employee experience is downplayed or overlooked.

The bottom line is, if you want to change workplace culture, you have to change the day-to-day experience of the employees. And this means being open and honest to really looking at how people are being treated. In addition, as leaders, you have to be open to criticism and take responsibility for your contribution to the day-to-day experience of those you work with. And, you have to be change-ready. You have to be willing and competent to make the necessary changes to your own attitudes and behavior such that you can contribute in a positive way to employees' day-to-day life in the organization.

As an aside, a recent Change Lab 2019 Workplace Survey found that it's not the pace of change in workplaces that is wearing people down or burning them out. It's how leaders approach change and how successful the changes are that either causes workers to thrive or to barely get by. The survey also showed that it's not the ability of leaders to tell-and-control that delivers the best change results. Instead, it's their ability to invite-and-inquire as they bring diverse voices into meaningful change conversations and give them the freedom to self-organize and take action.

And, according to Shirish Jain, Lead Consultant, Transformation Management with Larsen & Toubro Group,

> […] managing change in the manufacturing industry can get much more complex than expected, when compared with other industries, particularly when it comes to handling change for people working on the shop floor. They have a highly focused thought process, a way of working and any change that transforms their day-to-day work is dealt with strong resistance. It gets complicated further due to strong unions that push the change back. The change is perceived differently by different stakeholders. While shop-floor workers will be worried about potential job losses due to automation and a steep learning curve for latest technology adoption, the management faces a challenge of huge manufacturing skill gap and how to upskill relatively older generation employees who are not tech savvy. Increasing regulatory and compliance measures associated with technology changes, is another critical aspect organizations deal with.

Shirish goes on to recommend focus in five areas to manage the people side of change. These are listed below with some questions I would ask you to consider.

- Effective sponsorship—Establishing a strong sponsorship network by leveraging influential stakeholders in various departments
  - ***THINK ABOUT IT: How do you establish "strong" sponsorship? And what does "strong" mean? What does it look like? Isn't this about trust and engagement?***
- Unified communication—In manufacturing, various departments are often reliant on one another to get the job done. Hence, the necessity of frequent and timely communication to other teams when an action has been performed, is highly imperative.
  - ***THINK ABOUT IT: How do you encourage cross-team communication? And how do you communicate effectively? For example, it's fine to say we need to do these things, but people***

don't know how. Or, sometimes the process and situational factors actually inhibit communication.

- Coaching—Time to time coaching is essential for managing any resistance coming through strong unions' demands. There needs to be focused discussions and workshops planned to communicate about the change.
  - ***THINK ABOUT IT: What is coaching? Do supervisors and managers have coaching skills? How do you coach in time-strained environments? And why are we only coaching during periods of resistance?***
- Training—With fast-evolving technology changes in the manufacturing sector, there is a need to prepare the next generation of the workforce, which is skilled and more adaptive to changes.
  - ***THINK ABOUT IT: What if the workforce does not have continuous learning skills? What if skills are not being assessed properly? How do you know training is effective?***
- Change sustenance—In order to sustain the change, there should be a constant feedback loop and on-the-go course correction by key stakeholders. From the stakeholder perspective, there must be representation from all the key functions, including HR teams, when it comes to change in any work-related policies or behavior.
  - ***THINK ABOUT IT: Who is giving the feedback? How are they giving feedback?***

While all of this makes sense on the surface, as per the bold sections above, it is not enough to determine "*what*" should happen to manage change. When it comes to managing people during change, the "*how*" is significantly more important. And the reality is, when civility is embedded into the workplace as common practice, that is, supervisors and managers learn how to show respect and how to communicate in a civil way every day, in every interaction, and when the organization adopts civility policies related to transparency, fair play, ethics, etc., the fact is, change of any kind is less difficult.

In the Advanced Thinking section of Chapter 2, I suggested that most of us know what is right and wrong, but with regard to people

treatment, "[…] good people sometimes make bad decisions about how to treat others due in large part to relinquishing their personal power to others, or due to perceived expectations or pressure in specific environments."[2] Lew suggests that people treatment is a complex dynamic, but basically nurture—workplace culture in this case—rather than nature—the personal traits and qualities of the individuals in the culture, defines decision-making, especially related to interpersonal relationships and people treatment. I believe this may be true of many manufacturing environments, and it was in fact true of several organizations where I worked.

Question

Using the iceberg metaphor, draw an iceberg showing what might be below the surface for each of the following behaviors which would be observed in a manufacturing environment.

Scenario 1

Decision-making—Observed above the surface:

- Silence
- Eye-rolling
- Shrugging shoulders
- Disengagement

Scenario 2

Errors—Observed above the surface:

- Employee appears to have correct equipment.
- Employee appears to know what to do.
- Employee continually makes unacceptable errors.

[2]Lew Bayer. CEO Civility Experts Inc. 2016

Scenario 3

Failure to wear safety equipment (personal protection equipment)—Observed on the surface:

- Requirements are in the employee handbook.
- Other employees on the team are wearing PPE.
- Supervisor has asked employee to put PPE on.
- Employee has been provided with the equipment.

Addressing the people side of change is an important aspect of ensuring a successful change initiative. Sadly, this is the piece that many organizations fail to acknowledge and/or plan for.

Based on 20 years of fieldwork designing and implementing workplace civility initiatives combined with 20 years of workplace experience, we (Bayer & Masotti) have collaborated to devise a workplace civility initiative strategy called "The Trident Approach."

The Trident Approach® (Masotti & Bayer) to Changing Workplace Culture

The Trident Approach is a three-step approach to changing workplace culture. The approach presents as an "initiative" in that it goes beyond merely offering training and instead addresses multiple aspects of the organization's framework.

Specifically, the Trident Approach:

- Incorporates targeted, customized, civility training as a requirement for any or all leadership roles
- Embeds civility in human resources processes and as such represents a meaningful and strategic continuous improvement strategy that supports:
    - skills development and performance
    - trust and engagement
    - continuous learning
    - positive workplace experience/culture

In addition, the approach includes specific civility-focused leadership skills and knowledge for:

- Introducing and implementing SOPs
- Assessing skills
- Conducting on-the-job coaching including giving feedback
- Problem-solving
- Removing perceived performance barriers

There are three "prongs" to the approach:

- Targeted civility-focused communication training
- A strategic technique for observation and assessment
- Application of the "Masotti Methods" which include specific ways of:
  - Observing and gathering information
  - Giving feedback
  - Reducing variability

Step 1: Teaches leaders the value and impact of civility and incorporates key learnings about "how" to engage in civil communication, e.g., incorporating civility into tone, word choice, and demeanor. The strategy incorporates social intelligence aspects including social radar, social style, and

Figure 5 The Trident©, Masotti, 2019

social knowledge. Ideally this training happens BEFORE the change initiative is introduced.

Step 2: Observe and assess the current situation, culture, and practices, e.g., use the civility culture continuum, civility symptoms survey, change readiness and trust assessments, skills and competency testing, etc., as well as the signature AEIOU® method to understand the current situation and identify priority needs. Ideally assessment and observation happen before, and throughout the change initiative.

Step 3: Apply "The Masotti Methods." The signature Masotti methodology includes two specific models that support steps 1 and 2 of the Trident and teach supervisors/managers how to give feedback, and how to fix any people-oriented problems that are not resolved through civility best practices, e.g., via the Masotti feedback method, or the "make the box smaller process" for reducing **variability**. Ideally the Masotti methods are applied both during and after the change initiative is implemented.

As an aside, and as one way of subtly incorporating civility into workplace culture, consider teaching leaders not to use the word "change." Since many people have a visceral reaction and assume the worst when they hear the word "change," it is recommended to encourage everyone involved in a workplace civility initiative to replace the word *change* with the word *learning* and to focus on the positive, as well as on the end-in-mind goals and outcomes of the initiative.

For example:

- Avoid calling your initiative a change initiative, call it a "Ready to Learn," or "XYZ Workplace Civility Project." Maybe it's an employee engagement program or your building a better workplace initiative, whatever you like; just try not to put the word change in the title.
- Instead of saying, "As a result of market changes and global trends, we all have to change. We need to work faster and be more agile,"

say, "We can build on our current skills and take this opportunity to learn as we adapt to trends and market shifts."

- Don't say, "You need to change how you work," say, "Learning how to work differently will make you more efficient."
- Rather than saying, "You are all required to attend change management training," say, "The continuous learning course we're all taking, is going to help us manage whatever comes our way."
- Employees are more inclined to get excited about learning opportunities versus requirements to change, and people usually like knowing what the benefit of the change/learning will be. For example, say, "We can all reduce our daily stress by learning how to manage our time better. Attendance requested: Learning opportunity for supervisors, every Tuesday 9–11 a.m.," versus saying, "We are wasting too much time and must do things differently. Mandatory training for supervisors. Time management training six consecutive Tuesday mornings 9–11 a.m."

The Trident Approach offers a way of problem-solving without leaders even realizing they are problem-solving. For example, incorporating civility training prior to issues or changes occurring sets leaders and teams up for success when issues and questions and challenges arise.

And civility is easy to teach on the job. Because civility is about people treatment, supervisors and managers can be taught how to behave civilly in a relatively short time. And they in turn can then teach others just by leading by example. Civility is difficult to understand if a person doesn't experience it, and so the quickest and easiest way to coach and teach civility is to simply ask supervisors and managers to "live it"—that is, behave in a civil way and consistently engage in positive people treatment. When the employee team experiences the impact of this positive treatment, they naturally want the positive treatment to continue and so they often mirror the overall tone and approach of their civil higher-ups and a reciprocal relationship starts to develop.

A key outcome of this reciprocity is high trust among and across the work team at all levels. When this high trust is established when things are going well—just because it is a way of being and living in the culture that is expected and endorsed—the trust is carried through to stressful

situations. Because there is high **trust**, it tends to be easier for teams to work together through issues and crises. This is because trust fosters increased:

- communication
- support, e.g., help with tasks, mentoring, empathy
- personal responsibility
- understanding of accountability to the team
- wellness, e.g., due to less stress
- sharing and collaboration
- ability for teams to accept decisions and changes without fear and worry
- engagement

Civility training is like stocking the shelf or assembling a toolbox. It prepares people for what might come next. When you use the Trident Approach, you can eliminate **kaizen** and meetings and wasted time. This is because the majority of what is perceived as "problems," e.g., people being late, people not doing what they're told, people not being happy at work, are largely due to negative people treatment. If you teach leaders how to treat people well, people will typically perform better. And they will perform better as a habit versus as a requirement. This makes civility a preemptive, proactive problem-solving strategy.

See Chapter 9 for Optional Assignment.

Words to Know

- Workplace culture
- Continuous improvement
- Respectful workplace
- Emotional intelligence
- Change initiative
- Organizational behaviour
- Theory of omission
- People treatment
- Personal protective equipment (PPE)

- Trust
- Kaizen
- Variability

For Review

As explained earlier in the chapter, one of the key requirements for a successful change initiative is high trust. And one of the ways you can build trust is by teaching supervisors and managers to lead with civility. By exhibiting civil communication and related positive people treatment, employees' day-to-day experience living in the workplace can change in a meaningful and positive way.

Here are three situations/scenarios where leaders have an opportunity to build trust and a list of specific behaviors for doing so.

Scenario #1: Vacation Planning

I have found that for many production employees, one of the most important aspects of feeling in control on the job (besides safety) is their availability to book vacations. Factors important for building trust in this scenario include transparency and sharing information. Specifically, leaders can do the following:

- Let the employee know exactly how much vacation he or she is allowed.
- Let the person know if it is mandatory for vacations to be booked during shutdowns and holidays like Christmas time.
- Be transparent and have a chart or readily available information (like a posted chart of what days are available and what days are booked already).
- Have a standardized process for booking vacations—a formula; For example, seniority, job class, skills coverage.
- Make it clear that the vacation is to be planned and booked far in advance.
- Leave a buffer for emergency days.
- Collect data and discover patterns in absence days or shifts and plan manpower and vacations accordingly.

By collecting data and being transparent with posted information, the process becomes less emotional, and most of the decisions are made by the employee based on transparent information before his or her request gets made.

- This streamlines the vacation booking process and employees feel more comfortable and less stressed when booking vacations. Employees see the effort you are putting in to ease their experience at work and this builds trust.

Scenario #2: Mis-Build or Mistakes on the Job

In my experience, when an employee makes a mistake at work, you can use this as an opportunity to build trust with the employee by doing the following:

- Look at the process and how that process allowed the employee to make a mistake.
- Focus on the process and not on the individual who made the mistake.
- Involve the employee with questions about the process, versus asking questions directed to the person. For example, ask, "How long does it typically take to run the cycle?" instead of "Why are you taking 52 minutes to run the cycle?"
- Ask if the employee has been trained. Ask when that training took place. Ask who delivered the training. And ask if the employee needs more training.
- Ensure that the employee has the right tools or skills to perform the job.
- Ask if the employee has any suggestions to improve the job.
- Ask if the employee has ever suggested improvements.
- If yes, ask more questions. What were the suggestions? Did they ever get acted upon? Was it a success? Where you thanked for the suggestion?
- If no, ask the employee why he or she has never made a suggestion.

- Provide corrective actions and plan on all answers. Give timelines on when you will get back to employee. Follow up with results within those timelines.
- Give results of the suggestions within timelines.
- Give answers if not all suggestions could be acted upon.
- Explain that not all suggestions can be acted upon based on timelines, ordering parts or supplies, changing collective agreement, and costs.
- Be open and give all information you can. If some answers cannot be given due to confidential information, then be honest and say so.

By investigating an employee's mistake and looking at the process and not the individual, the employee will be more comfortable giving information to improve his or her work.

- Trust is revealed when employees offer information and this process is key because it is PROACTIVE and prevents mistakes in the future.
- This circle of trust and release of information is the most important aspect of continuous improvement, and civility of this process is the precursor.

Scenario #3: Requests for Tools or Supplies from a Person to Do a Job

One thing I learned early on is that the biggest opportunities to gain trust are the requests you can respond to immediately.

- A good example would be requests for items like PPE, safety glasses, gloves, wrist guards, or a boot slip to get new safety boots. Get these items as soon as possible so the employee knows that he or she can rely on you to complete simple requests.
- More complex requests like tools require due diligence. Items like a new battery gun, replacement of worn sockets bits, etc., customized tools specific to an operation, or any item that cannot be delivered immediately require your due diligence to acquire and you

should state so, and keep the employee updated on progress resolving the request.

- Your due diligence needs to be transparent. Give feedback and follow up on what you are doing to get the tools and the timelines on when and if they will arrive. If the request cannot be delivered, be up-front and tell the employee why.

Trust is built when your employees' simple requests are addressed immediately or at least in a timely manner. Requests that will take longer to complete require your due diligence and you should mention this to the employee. Being transparent and including the employee in the details about the response to the request will help the employee feel confident that you are following through. He or she will also feel more sure that you care about the suggestion and that you value him or her as a person with something to contribute.

How Much Do You Remember?

1. According to Gallup, what percentage of change initiatives fail?
   a. 35 percent
   b. 62 percent
   c. 70 percent
   d. 90 percent
2. The iceberg theory is sometimes called what?
   a. The theory of everything
   b. The theory of omission
   c. Hemmingway method
   d. Surface theory
3. According to Masotti & Bayer, workplace culture is "the habits, traditions, attitudes, tone of interactions, and general behaviors that make up employees' day-to-day experience." True or False?
4. In order of application, the three prongs in the Masotti Trident Approach are:
   a. Assessment, training, feedback
   b. Evaluation, training, feedback
   c. Training, assessment, feedback
   d. Feedback, assessment, training

Recommended Reading

Bruno, B. 2017. *Change in Manufacturing.* Scotts Valley, CA: CreateSpace.

Homework Assignment

Review the chart below depicting the Workplace Incivility Filtering System. Choose one of the examples of a symptom of incivility (shown in the octagon at the top of the chart) and then write an explanation of how you could apply the filtering system to address that problem. For example:

a. Re: the first "filter of civility" how specifically would you:
   - Build trust?
   - Identify skills gaps that might be causing the symptom?
   - Identify how eliminating that incivility symptom would align with an organizational goal?
   - Address aspects of change resistance and/or readiness potentially related to that symptom?
   - What specific training would you provide to address the skills gap identified?
   - How would you communicate the expectations for alternative behaviors, e.g., to replace the incivility symptom?
b. Describe some potential observations. For example, once you have completed the actions related to a) above, what potential challenges, issues, or outcomes might you observe?
c. Once you assess, adjust, and measure (filter) until the incivility is resolved, explain which measurable metric might be most impacted.

Advanced Thinking—Preparing for Chapter 4

In my experience, many of the problems that teams are tasked with solving, the projects that they spend time and money on, would not even have arisen as problems if civility had been embedded into the organization's policies and practices. Examples of this are "low-hanging fruit" problems that often take up many of the resources allocated to continuous improvement, and sadly do not always show good return on investment or long-term benefits.

What do you think?

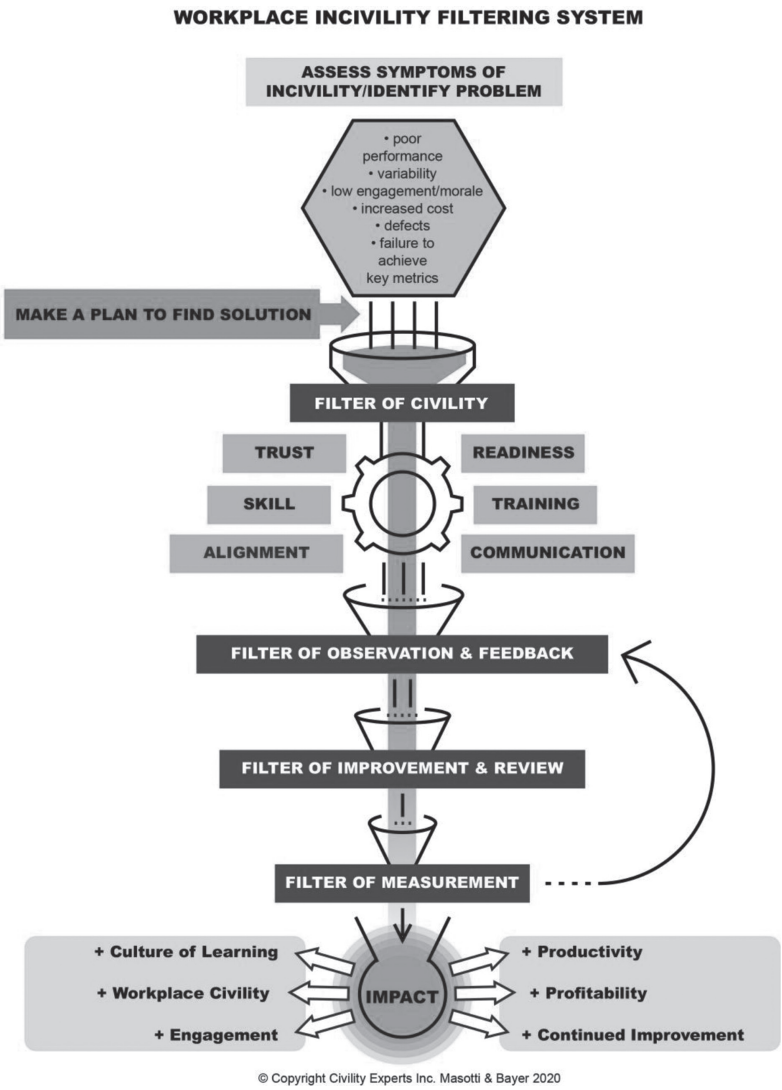

Figure 6 Workplace Incivility Filtering System©, Masotti, 2019