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Hazel V.J. Moir

Centre for Policy Innovation, Australian National University, Canberra

Hazel.Moir@anu.edu.au

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The cost of bad behavior: how incivility is damaging your business and what to do about it, by Christine Pearson and Christine Porath, London, Portfolio, 2009, xiv + 224 pp., \$25.95, ISBN 978-1-59184-261-3

The Cost of Bad Behavior may seem an odd book review choice in *Prometheus*, which has an emphasis on innovation. However, the link becomes apparent if one is prepared to accept that incivility in the workplace can interfere with communication flows, and hence possibly damage the processes underpinning innovation. Having said this, innovation is not a central theme in Pearson and Porath's book. Rather, their concern is with incivility and its costs. Consequently, there are themes in this book that are of value to innovation researchers and innovation managers.

Incivility is defined as the 'exchange of seemingly inconsequential inconsiderate words and deeds that violate conventional norms of workplace conduct' (p. 21). The bulk of incivility is considered to be 'top down', part of a power play, but there can be upwardly aimed incivility that is covert, frequently achieved through subtle sabotage. Pearson is from the Thunderbird School of Global Management and Porath from the University of Southern California. They have a lengthy history of writing and research about incivility, which at least some readers of this review may find an almost everyday occurrence in the workplace. As the authors note, 'As anyone who has worked in an office knows, incivility doesn't have to involve a lot of drama' (p.13). My own experience with universities and that of many colleagues suggests this is so. The commonplace nature of incivility presents a challenge to Pearson and Porath that underpins the emphasis on cost in the book. The authors claim that while their academic work was being accepted by top theoretical journals, their work was not being accepted by empirical journals. They claim that editor's comments often reflected the following: fascinating topic, relevant to anyone who studies management or manages people, but you have collected extensive data from just one source, the target (of incivility). In response to this, *The Cost of Bad Behavior* explores the cost of incivility, largely to the organization as opposed to the individual (although this is not neglected). Putting a dollar figure on incivility in terms of how it affects performance is, I suspect, an attempt to give the theme some credibility as a business

issue. The authors admit that costs are difficult to quantify (even though they do not shy away from making some informed estimates).

Contributing to costs is the behavior of the targets of incivility, employees who harm their organizations in meaningful ways by purposely trying to exact retribution. Targets not only seek revenge, but also become less creative and cognitively able as a result of uncivil behavior. There is a rather challenging quote included from a company CEO who pleaded with the authors: 'Hey, if you find any companies that don't have incivility issues, will you let me know? I want to apply for a job there' (p.63). While a comment like this points to the endemic nature of the problem, the sting in the tail may be that there is little point trying to do much about it as incivility is so widespread – it is just a cost of doing business and it should be managed as best it can.

The Cost of Bad Behavior appeals to managers and workers at all levels. It is divided into three sections. The first is a series of four chapters introducing the phenomenon of incivility, describing its prevalence and characteristics. The second (chapters 5–11) addresses the costs of incivility – whom it hurts and how. The third section (chapters 12–17) describes what individuals, organizations and society as a whole can do to promote a civil environment. There is also an appendix that extols the value of civility as seen by Confucius, Montezuma, Lincoln and others.

From an innovation studies point of view, I suspect readers will benefit generally from the broad lessons of the book. There are interesting chapters in the third part of the book, which looks at what firms, leaders, targets and offenders can do to create a civil workplace. However, if readers are looking for specific examples relating to innovation or knowledge creation, then their omission could be used as a guide for readers to pose their own questions. For example, in the second chapter (which asks how prevalent incivility is in society), mention is made of the ivory tower, referring to universities, of course. The focus here is on a lack of respect shown by students to university teachers, but there is no hint that labor relations within universities are also riddled by incivility. In fact, it is what is ignored or glossed over in the book that is particularly interesting. To be fair, there is reference to a university department suffering a mass exit of good staff because of incivility, but there is little explanation. One is left with the impression that the employees create their own fate by becoming spiteful and leave anyway. The authors avoid the structural causes of incivility, preferring to treat it as either a broader trend in society or something associated with individual personalities and the working environment (p.75).

There are other anecdotal observations peppering the book that cry out for deeper analysis. An example is the middle manager in a firm that is tormented by his immediate boss. He complains to senior management and the result is that the boss gets a promotion and the tormented middle manager ends up with a heart attack. Another example is the failure of a human resources department to attribute the departure of employees from the organization to incivility. The authors have little interest in exploring the apparent failure of human resources staff to make a connection.

Although the innovation theme is not at the forefront of this book, there is an interesting reference to the demise of Fairchild Computing in the 1970s. By treating employees badly, Fairchild lost talent to Intel and others. Key staff left, poorer quality ones were recruited, ultimately contributing to a downward spiral and the company going out of business (p.95). Likewise, a link is made between incivility and productivity: 'When incivility is present, teammates pull back their efforts and clog the flow of information' (p.81). From an innovation perspective, observations such

as these are crying out for explication, but Pearson and Porath are keen to serve a general audience rather than take up the lead. They deal with costs, but the book would have been greatly enhanced if they had given more thought to the costs of information when considering incivility.

Despite this neglect of information costs, the top ten things that firms can do to create a civil workplace (chapter 13) all have a strong information component: (1) set zero tolerance expectations; (2) look in the mirror (which means that managers and executive must strive to live by the norms that have been set); (3) weed out trouble before it enters your organization; (4) teach civility; (5) train employees and managers how to recognize and respond to signals; (6) put your ear to the ground and listen carefully; (7) when incivility occurs, hammer it; (8) take complaints seriously; (9) do not make excuses for powerful instigators; and (10) invest in post departure interviews. There seems to be wisdom in this and the advice could be put to good use by managers trying either to curtail incivility or to manage innovation.

Having read *The Cost of Bad Behavior*, I am convinced that incivility has a considerable cost. It can corrode an organization from the inside. I suspect that innovation is a major casualty of incivility. Perhaps the biggest threat is the impact on knowledge and by that, I mean knowledge embedded in employees. The authors quote William Faulkner: 'A mule will labor ten years willingly and patiently for you, for the privilege of kicking you once' (p.30). One kick could sink an expensive project, and more could threaten the organization. When incivility becomes entrenched and systematized, it really should not be ignored. *The Cost of Bad Behavior* alerts us to the possible consequences.

Richard Joseph
Kalamunda, Western Australia
rajoseph4342@hotmail.com

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International handbook on regulating nanotechnologies, edited by Graeme A. Hodge, Diana M. Bowman and Andrew D. Maynard, Cheltenham, Edward Elgar, 2010, 640 pp., £175.00 (hardback), ISBN 978 1 84844 673 1

The academic and policy experts who have contributed to this international handbook have produced a rich set of analysis and strategic assessment of existing (and potential) regulatory frameworks governing nanotechnologies. Mapping access to this important source material and providing an understanding of the complexity of the 'value chain', the opportunities and the potential downsides of nanotechnologies provide the reader with a framework to assess this important new technological frontier. Importantly, this approach also suggests a broad spectrum of measures to help develop and assure better governance of nanotechnologies.

Just as nanotechnologies encompass a range of disciplines, including engineering, materials science, biotechnology, medicine, physics, chemistry and information technology, this handbook is an essential tool and guide to better comprehend nanotechnologies, and should be read by the full range of people involved in its development and governance. In particular, the large diverse policy community needs to