

# The Human Side of Safety



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Improving the safety and health of people and the places where they work.

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## The Value of Respect

According to a forthcoming book Christine Porath and Christine Pearson, *Mastering Civility: A Manifesto for the Workplace*, the number of employees who report having been treated rudely in the workplace doubled from 1998 to 2011. Today, half of all employees feel that their bosses have treated them with disrespect.

When talking with clients about this trend, many dismiss it as a function of the younger generation of workers being “too sensitive.” Regardless of the cause for this trend, employees who feel disrespected can hurt a company’s productivity, service, and safety.

According to data collected from 17 industries, here’s how employees respond to being treated with disrespect:

- 48% intentionally decrease work effort
- 47% intentionally decrease the time spent at work
- 38% intentionally decrease the quality of their work
- 66% say the performance declines

Experiencing rudeness also affected mental engagement: 63% of employees report they lost time worrying about rude interactions.

Perhaps most troubling:

- 25% admitted to taking their frustration out on customers after they were treated rudely at work; and
- 78% said their commitment to the company decreased; some actually left their jobs due to rude treatment.

Plenty has been written about how poor customer service and high turnover affect the bottom line. Less has been written about the impact of employee morale and engagement on workplace safety.

Here’s the simple “math.” Being treated with respect increases employee morale and engagement. When morale and engagement are high, employees are more willing to go the extra mile and do the right thing—even when nobody is looking.

Creating a culture of safety depends, to a large extent, on employees having an internal sense of accountability—consistently doing the right thing, not just meeting external safety compliance standards. Being treated with respect goes a long way toward engendering people’s commitment to the safety at all times.

Bottom line: treating employees with respect pays dividends because respect affects employee morale, engagement, and productivity—all of which impact safety and financial success.