

# Human Resource Development Review

<http://hrd.sagepub.com/>

---

## **Civility: A Must for Moving the Field Forward**

Thomas G. Reio, Jr

*Human Resource Development Review* 2011 10: 219

DOI: 10.1177/1534484311411068

The online version of this article can be found at:

<http://hrd.sagepub.com/content/10/3/219>

---

Published by:



<http://www.sagepublications.com>

On behalf of:



[Academy of Human Resource Development](http://www.ahrd.org)

**Additional services and information for *Human Resource Development Review* can be found at:**

**Email Alerts:** <http://hrd.sagepub.com/cgi/alerts>

**Subscriptions:** <http://hrd.sagepub.com/subscriptions>

**Reprints:** <http://www.sagepub.com/journalsReprints.nav>

**Permissions:** <http://www.sagepub.com/journalsPermissions.nav>

**Citations:** <http://hrd.sagepub.com/content/10/3/219.refs.html>

>> **Version of Record** - Aug 12, 2011

# Civility: A Must for Moving the Field Forward

Human Resource Development Review  
10(3) 219–221  
© SAGE Publications 2011  
Reprints and permission: <http://www.sagepub.com/journalsPermissions.nav>  
DOI: 10.1177/1534484311411068  
<http://hrd.sagepub.com>



One of my most fulfilling activities as editor has been working with the editorial team, reviewers, and authors in shaping, developing, and polishing the fascinating array of scholarship that has been submitted to *Human Resource Development Review* these past 2.5 years. With article submissions increasing at the journal, it is clear that creative thought is alive and well in the field. However, along with increasing submissions is an increased demand for additional reviews from our editorial board members and ad hoc reviewers. On top of this is our publisher's strong desire for faster turnaround times for reviews and editorial decisions. Overall, I have been extremely pleased with the promptness and quality of our reviews because this impressive work has reduced editorial decision turnaround times appreciably. Still, as an editorial board member and reviewer for quite a number of journals, in general I think I can reasonably state that as professionals we can improve to better meet the needs of authors, journals, and our respective fields. A possible means to improving may be approaching manuscript reviews as an act of civility toward our colleagues and the field.

Despite being busy and often pressed greatly for time, as editors and reviewers we must remain mindful of the need for modeling professional, civil behavior. Being civil entails treating one another with due respect; being uncivil involves rudeness and insensitivity without necessarily aiming to cause harm (Andersson & Pearson, 1999). Being editor means never losing sight that publishing an article is a process fraught with uncertainty and anxiety for prospective authors. Being respectful, civil, and thus professional means coordinating an effort by reviewers and the editorial team to promptly and professionally render thoughtful judgment about the scholarly merit of the manuscript, and as importantly, how to improve it. Of course, the editorial team also works hard to answer inquiries in a short amount of time. No question should seem too farfetched from anxious future authors who deserve nothing less than a punctual, courteous reply. Indeed, seemingly "silly" questions do not bestow upon editors the right to write "snippy," rude replies. Again, the editor's job is to model civil behavior and not promulgate rudeness toward colleagues in the field.

A vital part of a timely, thorough review process is maintaining clear, responsive communication between editors and reviewers. This communication requires answering editorial team inquiries in a reasonable amount of time. Waiting 2 weeks to respond or not at all to a review request can be construed by some as simply rude, unnecessary behavior. Remember, not answering adds 2 weeks to the review process and can erode efforts to building and maintaining a respectable journal impact factor. It is

unnecessary because a quick reply about your availability would have saved everyone much time. Likewise, neglecting to return a review by a mutually agreed upon time can be problematic. At the very least, let the editor know you may be running a little behind; that is civil, professional behavior. In this case, we are respecting both the editor's and author's need to know about the status of a manuscript.

As a whole, reviewers tend to be passionate about their research and profession. This passion and expertise shines through in their reviews, yet sometimes this passion can lead reviewers to taking too strong a tone with their recommendations for improvement. I will never forget a colleague who early in my career received a one-sentence manuscript review stating, "This is not worth the paper it is written on." Besides feeling terrible for my colleague, to this day I cannot believe the editor sent this note forward. Even worse, it seemed fantastic that anyone would write such a counterproductive, uncivil review. Being the recipient of some rather nasty reviews myself where the reviewer even signed his name, I must say this kind of uncivil behavior hardly serves to move the field forward. In my view, everyone has the right to disagree in a civil, productive manner; no one has the right to be rude and insensitive. By the way, my colleague took his article and published it in a better journal! So did I.

Civility is a two-way street where mutual respect is required (Andersson & Pearson, 1999). Thus, authors must be respectful and therefore civil toward editors and reviewers as well. In academe, authors are getting free, expert advice from individuals who are genuinely trying to help clarify and improve your work. This is how our peer-reviewed publishing system works. I strongly urge authors not to let their passion cloud their judgment in communicating respectfully with editor and reviewer recommendations. A civil way to disagree with a recommendation is to kindly offer scholarly evidence as to why a recommendation might not be suitable for your research. An uncivil approach might be simply stating the reviewer is misinformed without presenting any scholarly backup for your claim. Publishing scholarly work is a civil communication process for the betterment of the field; it is decidedly not a cause for mortal combat.

A final type of incivility from authors may be not informing editors about their intentions once receiving a "revise and resubmit" offer. One must remember that much work went into reviewing your scholarship, with the aim of helping you put your best foot forward to the field when published. As an editor, I must say a revise and resubmit is about as good as it gets. Frankly, I have never published an article at *Human Resource Development Review* without some need for revision. Undeniably, the need for revision is a fact of life at most peer-reviewed journals. Notwithstanding, if the recommendations for revision seem too onerous, simply state that is the case. When it is not possible to meet a specified deadline for resubmitting one's work, a quick note as to when the manuscript will be ready would be most appreciated by the editor. On the other hand, if your manuscript is rejected for publication, the need for civil, but open communication remains.

If we are to continue moving forward as a field, interacting civilly and productively is a must. As authors, reviewers, and editors, we should keep fostering the development of scholarship through being rigorous, but civil, toward our colleagues.

Thomas G. Reio, Jr.  
Florida International University, Miami, FL, USA

## Reference

Andersson, L. M., & Pearson, C. M. (1999). Tit for tat? The spiraling effect of incivility in the workplace. *Academy of Management Review*, 24, 452-471.