

**How a New Year's call to action took a month to write**

I planned to launch 2016 with a call for Mutual Respect as the overarching goal for standards and habits in the diverse, flexible and healthy workplace. For those who missed it – or had forgotten its focus on changing managerial habits -- I was going to suggest reading the December Bulletin, [\*\*FINALLY, Let's Turbocharge Manager Habits\*\*](#). [link to Flex Bulletin 107] Encouraging the organizational shift from common behaviors of mutual disrespect to the consistent practices of Mutual Respect seemed an excellent way to start the year.

And then along came "Exhibit A." Although I live just across the line from Washington, DC I take my mood and sense of progress not from the political world, but from the state of businesses across the country. Still I cannot ignore the dismissiveness, blood sport and paralysis that seem to dominate the institutions in our nation's capital. I just try not to give them too much pride of place in my thinking. As the last *Bulletin* suggests, it is far healthier to focus on the post-recession resurgence of positive change in our workplaces.

**How would Rodney King's plea "Can we all get along?" play in this primary season?**

Fresh from the holidays and set to write my emphatic call to action, I was soon swept away by the inescapable and seemingly ubiquitous tsunami of Presidential primary politics. The off-putting acidity that had risen through the later days of President Bush's and most of President Obama's terms seemed a mild corrosive compared to the toxicity that has marked the 2016 campaign – a stew seasoned with vitriol, contempt and disrespect. Not everyone all the time, but too many way too much of the time.

Like the passerby eyeing an auto accident, I found it hard to take my eyes off the smoldering wreck. I sat down to write this piece several times, but in the context of regular eruptions of disrespect I found myself feeling that a piece about mutual respect would seem overly optimistic, show me to be horribly out of touch with the culture or strike readers as the worst of all things – unrealistic.

**Another adage: "All that's needed for disrespect to triumph is for the respectful to do nothing."**

As the weeks have gone by, I've regained my perspective. It would be great if our national political leaders or would-be leaders actually led by example. But there is little likelihood that our dysfunctional government and its would-be heirs will turbocharge a movement toward greater respect and mutual respect in the institutions where most of us spend our lives. Progress in this arena is up to us.

Perhaps now more than ever, it's time to integrate mutual respect into the many change initiatives that are underway, ranging from diversity and inclusion to flexibility and wellness. Why Mutual Respect? The power of Mutual Respect as a standard is two-fold. It is an accountability-based two-way street, and it is built on an integrated set of skills that are taught as new habits. The whole package sounds simple but succeeds only as a shared and demanding discipline. A virtue of Mutual Respect as a standard is that in our experience people can readily perceive when they are being disrespected – or respected. And the desired skills and habits facilitate lasting change. The Mutual Respect standards and habits follow:



### Scanning the elements of the Mutual Respect approach

To be effective, the features of a Mutual Respect initiative are:

- ❖ *Standards.* It posits seven *linked* standards that, embedded, lead to mutual respect
- ❖ *Practices.* Each standard also defines an essential practice for *all* participants
- ❖ *Habits.* Practices require not just training, but a systematic habit change process
- ❖ *Accountability.* Groups commit to promoting standards, practicing enforcement
- ❖ *Universal.* All staff participate, from leaders to contractors

The next **Bulletin** will describe the uses and the methods of creating Mutually Respectful environments in greater detail. Regular Bulletins will resume with that mid-February issue, which happily will come out after both the Iowa and New Hampshire primaries have occurred and been talked to death 24/7.

Organizations – corporations, small businesses, nonprofits and others – have made progress through evolving mutual respect to date. Politics could learn from them. In the meantime, we will explore and continue the positive path forward. And belatedly:

**Happy 2016!!**

Best regards,  
Paul Rupert

Rupert & Company  
Chevy Chase, MD  
301-873-8489  
[paulrupertdc@cs.com](mailto:paulrupertdc@cs.com)

*Rupert & Company, publisher of the **Bulletin**, is the global leader in business-beneficial flexibility.*  
© 2016 Rupert & Company. All Rights Reserved