

Workplace Decorum

Decorum is about proper and polite behaviour. This is taken to mean that it embraces proper etiquette, politeness, respectfulness and appropriate language usage. The understanding is that exercise of decorum is about an understanding of accepted standards of conduct, proper social behavior that is linked to courtesy, decency, manners and respect. The embodiment of decorum in the workplace must be built on trust and a mutual understanding.

It is to be understood that decorum doesn't pertain only to standards an individual set for themselves, but extends to how you appear, treat others and express yourself. Decorum is also being respectful of what others expect of your behavior in a polite society. The noun from Latin word '*decōrus*', which means proper, becoming, handsome, is further distilled when compared with the word 'decorous', use as an adjective in the English language. It simply means, well-behaved in a particular situation.

In any public forum, formal setting and in the management of an institution, it is expected that professional conduct would take pride of place. In these instances, a high level of decorum is expected to be displayed. Professionals would want to associate with the fact that professionalism refers to the conduct, behavior, and attitudes, while decorum refers to the manners and social conventions that govern appropriate behavior in the workplace. Granted the workplace in this instance does not exclude the House of Assembly (Parliament) or the Senate.

What does it take to display professionalism at work? First and foremost, it requires that policies, rules, procedures and established practices are observed. This should not be taken to mean that in any event, there should be an abuse of privilege or where it applies, protection where immunity is extended, to abuse, vilify, use disparaging remarks, engage in personal attacks, cast aspersions on the character of an individual or attempt to sully the name of an individual. Where these acts are perpetrated is tantamount to the demonstration of irresponsible behaviour. This is nothing that ought to be encouraged or worthy of being defended. Such behaviour is offensive and shows a lack of respect for others.

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This behaviour has been seen on television networks and in social media being displayed by parliamentarians in their national assembly in various parts of the world. of late, it has become a prominent feature in House of Assembly of Barbados. It becomes a national disgrace where the those who are the law makers and who should be leading by example, engage in such uncomplimentary behaviour.

Some may wish to suggest that such behaviour is part of the cut and thrust of parliamentary debates. Even if this is so, is the lowering of the standard of debate to the level of personal attacks, the hurling of insults, character assassinations and improper motives on an individual what is to be expected and tolerated? Comparing this with what happens in the workplace, one wonders what the response would be, if an employee, whether employed in the private sector or by the state, were to display such indifferent behaviour to his employer. There can be no excuse for the anything less than professional conduct and acting in a dignified manner by our leaders, managers and employers.

It is shameful to think that in the midst of all display of behaviour in the walls of Parliament, would be distinguished professionals such as teachers, members the church, if not clergy and attorneys-at -laws, who by their silence, would seem to have given consent to this this kind of behaviour, where there is no evidence of it being denounced.

If the expectation is that our workplaces and society would conform to the standards of discipline, which include decorum. It is all about setting the right examples. The showing of bad manners in the classroom, whereby a student (s) rudely attempts to interrupt the teacher or another student while speaking, is to be frowned upon. The understanding is that an attorney- at – law who rudely attempts to interrupt or challenge a magistrate or a judge in a court of law, runs the risk of contempt of court.

Citizens who support the need for discipline would agree that there is a time and place for everything, and that respect must be shown for rules, law and order. Those in agreement say 'aye'. I think 'the ayes have it.

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