

TRAINING STAFF TO DEAL CIVILLY WITH UNCIVIL PEOPLE + • ○

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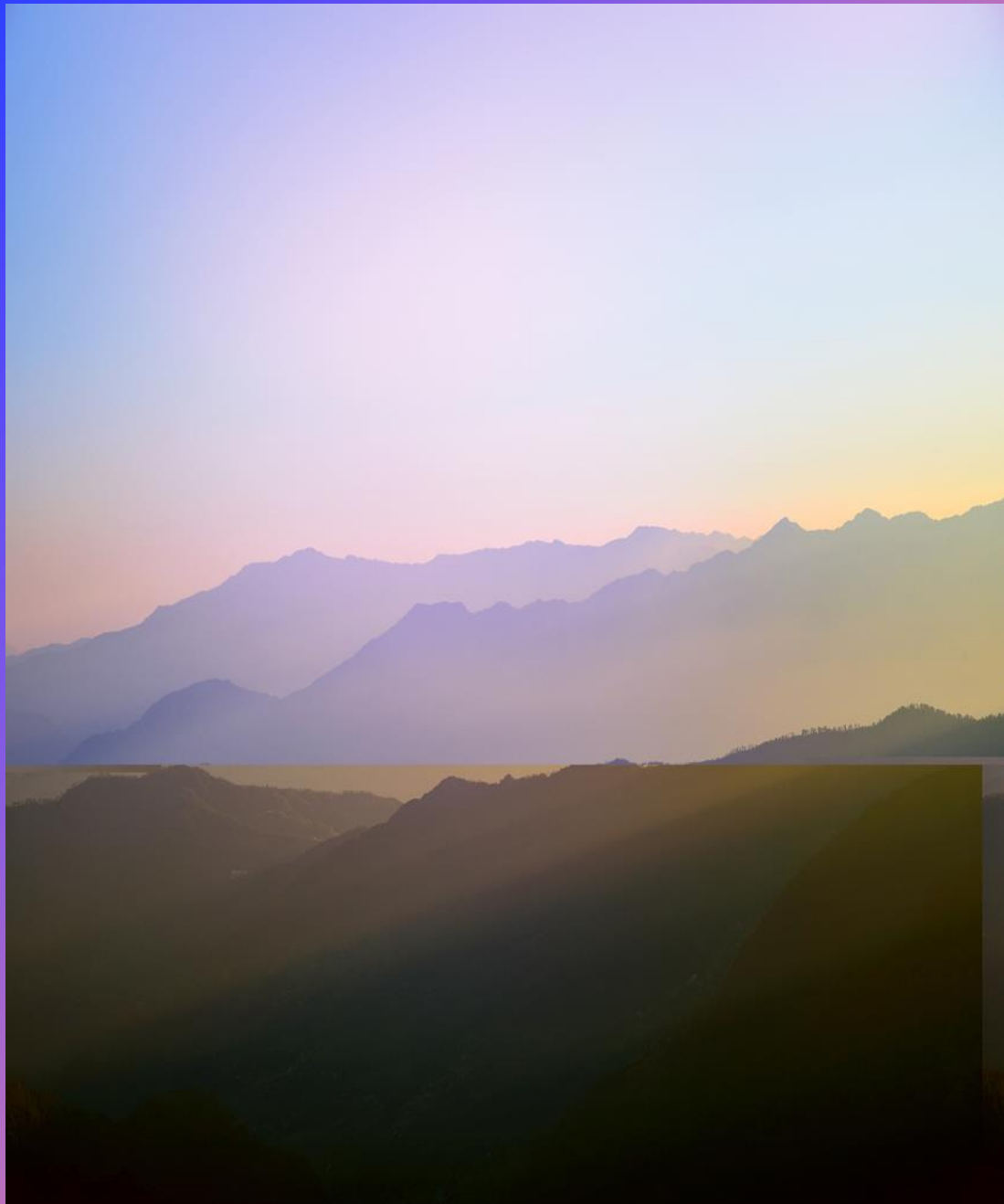
AGENDA

What's the Problem Here
What Not to Do
Training
Conclusion

Introduction

City staff deal with all sorts of people – but people who are happy with the way everything is going are usually sitting at home with a smile on their face watching the Cowboys or the Texans. The people that city staff deals with, more often than not, have a problem that needs to be corrected. And there is a good chance that the first two or three things the people did to fix the problem didn't work. So unpleasant confrontations ensue.





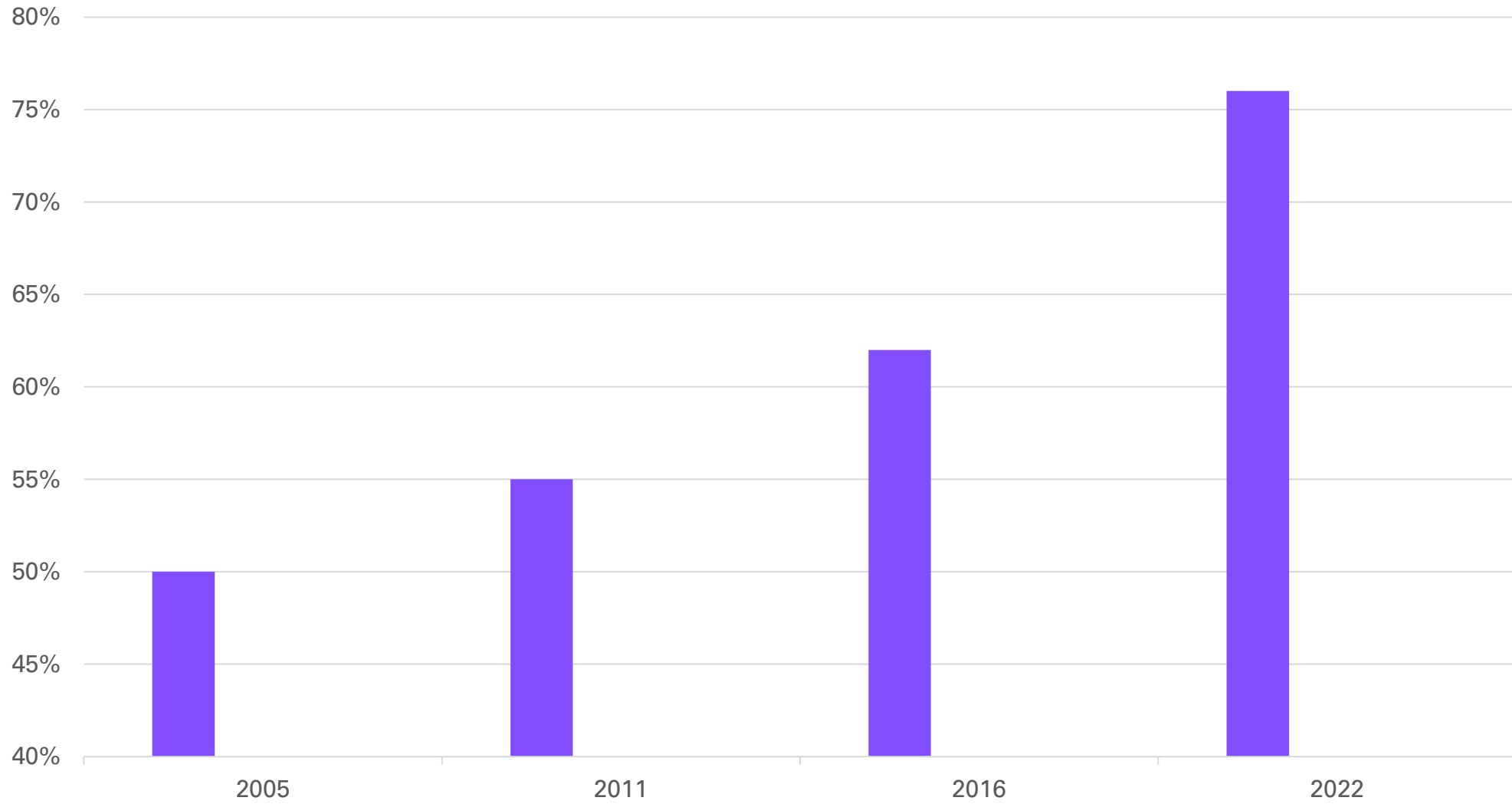
**Incivility usually
arises not from
malice but from
ignorance.**

Christine Porath

**WHAT'S THE
PROBLEM HERE?**



Incidents of Customer Incivility



Special problems of cities

Most of the examples I use are from the commercial arena: where “losing a customer” is a choice, even if it is a last resort.

Cities don't have that option – their customers will remain their customers even after the most disagreeable encounter.



WHAT NOT TO DO

What not to do

“I don’t see that as a problem”

- The customer obviously does see it as a problem.
- Dismisses the customer.

“I understand”

- This is a tricky one.
- The customer may think “no, you have no idea about my problem.”
- But you can say “I see why this is so upsetting to you.”

Meet force with force

- Yelling when they yell.
- Insulting when they insult.

What not to do

Politeness alone

- “Excuse me, sir. Would you please step into the gas chamber.”

“I will get back to you”

- This is a fine answer if you need to consult a supervisor, but tell the customer when you plan to get back to them.
- Then do it.

“Please hold. ‘Click.’”

- Ask for permission to put them on hold.
- Explain why you need to put them on hold.

What not to do

Take it personally

- Realize that their frustration is with the situation, not with you.

WHAT TO DO





What to do

Control the tone and volume of your voice

- If the customer is yelling, if you respond with a modulated volume and tone, it can reduce tension.
- Make sure that you aren't condescending.

Let them tell their story

- Try not to interrupt.
- Even if you see the problem early on, let them have their say.
- Then ask questions.

Empathize

- Put yourself in their shoes.
- Often city procedures are complex and confusing.
 - "I know this is confusing.
 - "I can't imagine what you are going through.
 - "I see how important this is to you."
 - "I know this isn't how you planned to spend your morning"

What to do

Positive feedback

- Calling me was the right thing to do.
- I'll let you explain your situation. Then we will work together to reach a resolution.

Deal with the situation, not the person

- Use "I" or "it" statements
 - "It's disrespectful to use negative comments towards people" rather than "You are rude."

Apologize??

- You can be sorry for the situation the customer finds himself in.
- Don't apologize for your city's policies.

What to do

If the answer is “no”

- “Here’s what I can do.”
- “I can do X or Y.”
 - Gives control to the customer.

Have an exit plan

- If the situation escalates, have a place to remove yourself to.
- A “code” word, to summon assistance.
- Ask a supervisor for support.



TRAINING STAFF



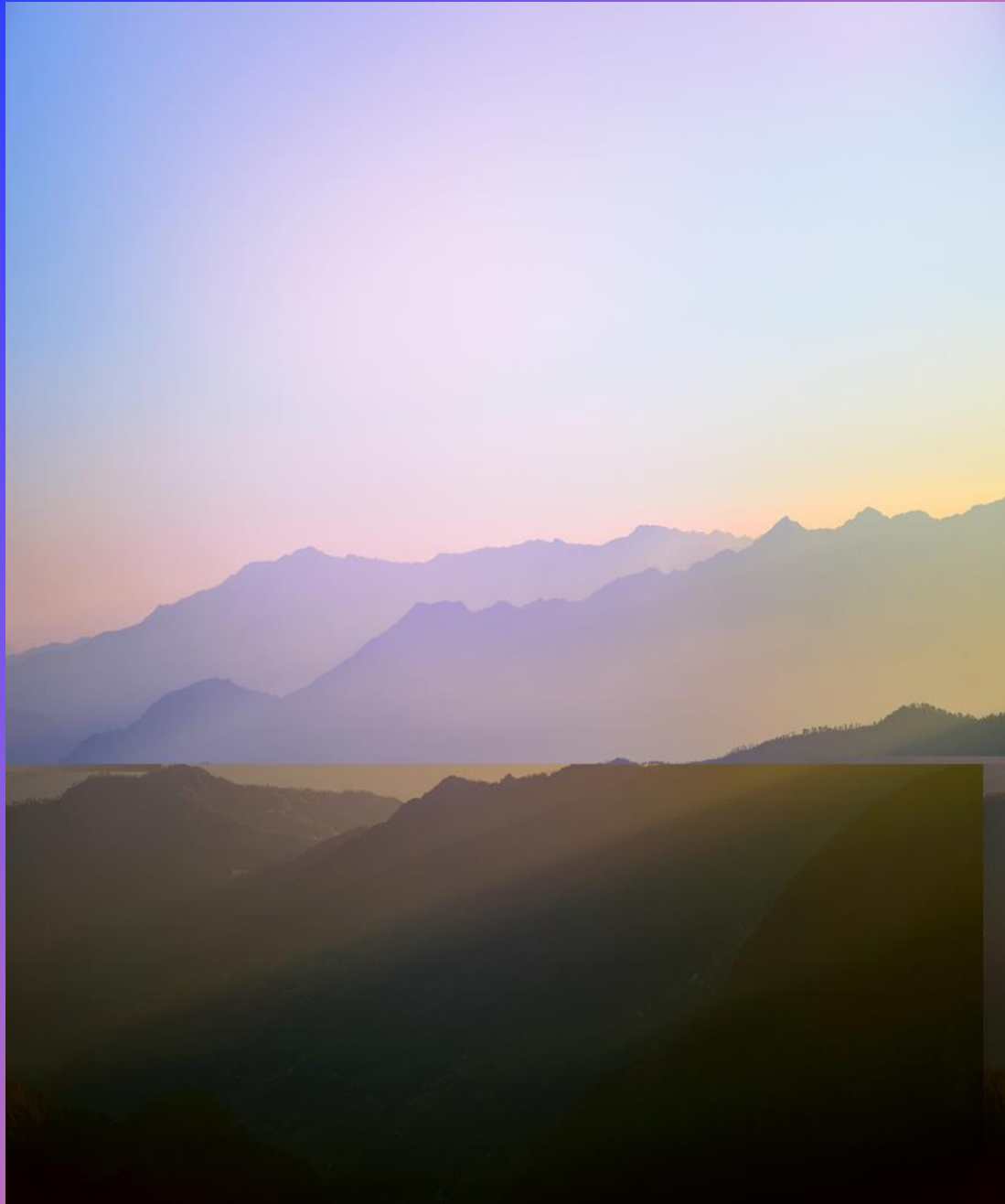
Training

Let your employees know you have their back

- A supervisor will back up the employee
- Do not tolerate bigotry or harassment

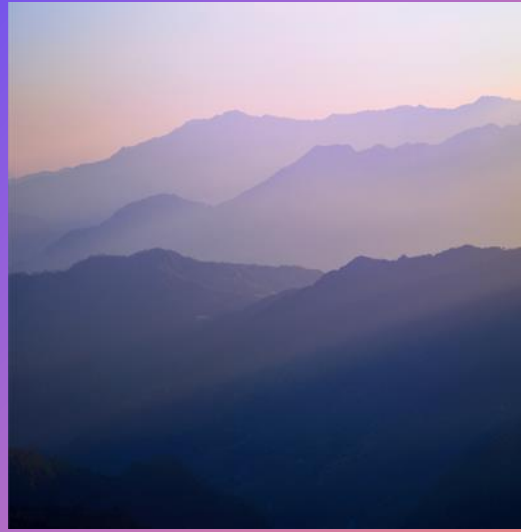
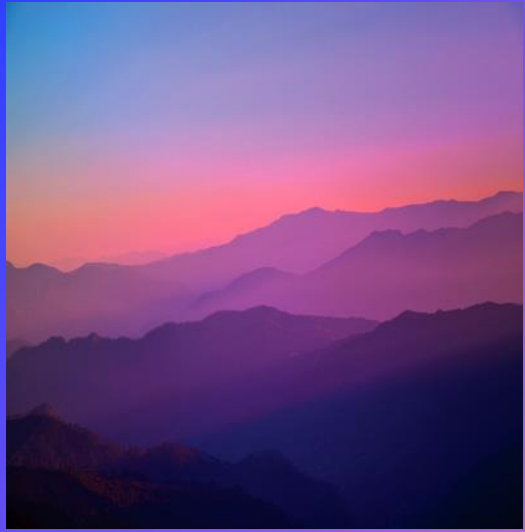
Procedures

- “Code words”
- But expect the employee to use these procedures



**Good rule to follow:
never reward
someone's incivility
by giving them the
headline they seek.**

Joe Scarborough



Summary

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize two main points:

- Empathy
- Lack of Defensiveness

Most unpleasant situations can be dealt with by understanding (1) where the customer is coming from and why they are frustrated; and (2) that the customer is frustrated by the situation, not the person trying to help them.

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THANK YOU

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