

FOCUS ON



Chris Morris joined Bassford Remele in 1993 after completing a clerkship with the Minnesota Court of Appeals, and was elected as a shareholder of the firm in 2000. He focuses his practice on representing businesses and individuals in commercial, employment and insurance disputes, defending professionals against malpractice claims, and advising businesses on compliance with credit, collection and privacy laws. He is recognized as a Top 40 Business Litigation Super Lawyer by Minnesota Law & Politics. Mr. Morris is a graduate of Harvard University and the University of Minnesota Law School and has been active in alumni organizations, serving as a past Director of the Harvard Alumni Association and President of the Harvard Club of Minnesota. He is Treasurer of the Hennepin County Bar Association, and a member of the Minnesota Fourth District Ethics Committee. Contact: [Christopher Morris](#)

An Interview With Christopher R. Morris

Rise above the uncivil behavior, and respond in the manner you would want to be treated

TCL What is your practice area? How long have you been practicing?

Business litigation and professional malpractice defense. I have been in practice for 14 years at the same firm, Bassford Remele in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

TCL Have you noticed more uncivil behavior in the workplace (within the firm, with clients, in the courtroom, etc.) in the past five years? If so, what types?

I have noticed increasing uncivil behavior among a few clients and lawyers, such as obnoxious emails, rudeness during depositions, and nasty correspondence. On the other hand, in almost all cases in which I have had prior dealings with the opposing lawyer, there are no problems.

TCL Does your firm have a policy that deals with uncivil behavior? How is it communicated throughout the firm?

I am not aware of a written policy, and fortunately I have not witnessed many problems within our own law firm.

TCL How do associates in your firm learn to handle uncivil behavior?

Observing senior attorneys, mentoring, and from their own life experiences.

TCL How confident do you feel in your ability to personally handle uncivil behavior?

By making an effort to be cordial, I am usually able to avoid problems from arising. I have learned not to take rude behavior personally.

TCL How would you advise another lawyer to best handle uncivil behavior?

Rise above it and respond in the manner you would want to be treated. Lead by example rather than lecturing the offending party.

TCL Think of an exchange with an individual in which he or she was especially rude, unprofessional or generally uncivil after which you walked away thinking you did not handle the situation well. What did you do and, on reflection, what would you have done differently?

I once responded to a series of nasty letters from an out-of-state lawyer by sending him a

copy of the professional aspirations governing his jurisdiction, and proposed that we agree to abide by them. In hindsight, it only inflamed the situation.

TCL Think of another contentious exchange during which you handled the situation effectively. What did you do?

Remained calm and responded in a positive tone.

TCL Do you have any other thoughts to share on this issue?

In recent years, following the advice of another lawyer, I have tried to make a point of engaging opposing counsel (especially those I do not know) in a friendly phone call or meeting as soon as possible after the start of a case, to get off on the right foot. If possible, I try to have lunch with opposing counsel and ask about his/her kids. It becomes difficult to act like a jerk thereafter.

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