Culture, Diversity, & Implicit Bias: Avoiding Discrimination and a Hostile Work Environment

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Avoiding Discrimination and a Hostile Work Environment

• The norm is to talk about . . .

✓ Training
✓ Policies
✓ Consistency
✓ Documentation
✓ Termination Checklist
All of That is Important, BUT

• In this day and age, we need to give as much thought about **how to go about** disciplining an employee or terminating employment, as the case may be, as we do about whether discipline / termination is legal and appropriate

• An employee who feels a positive connection to the organization, who feels respected, is much more likely to take to heart any criticism and is much less likely to bring a legal claim
Benefits of a Respectful Workplace Include:

- Improved employee morale, job satisfaction, and teamwork
- Lower absenteeism and turnover
- Increased productivity
- Employees are better equipped to manage conflict collaboratively
How Do We Create a Respectful Workplace?

• Culture
• Diversity
• Inclusion
• Leadership
What is Company Culture?

- Collective values, norms, beliefs, behaviors, attitudes, and underlying assumptions
- Shown in how the company conducts business and treats employees and others
- Established day-to-day and over time
- Affects performance and productivity

Six Elements Necessary to Cultivate a Great Company Culture

- **Purpose** means connecting employees to your organization’s reason for being or the difference you make in the world.
- **Opportunity** means providing employees the ability to learn new skills, develop, and contribute.
- **Success** means giving employees the opportunity to innovate, do meaningful work, and be on winning teams.
- **Appreciation** means acknowledging and recognizing employees’ outstanding work and unique contributions.
- **Well-being** means paying attention to and constantly working to improve employees’ physical, social, emotional, and financial health.
- **Leadership** means connecting employees to purpose, empowering them to do great work, and creating a sense of camaraderie.
Diversity vs. Inclusion

An employer can have a diverse workplace without having an inclusive culture.

The Numbers

Over half of U.S. employees say their company should do more to increase diversity and inclusion

• 60%+ of millennials say their employer should do more

Glassdoor; The Harris Poll
The Numbers

• **61%** of employees have experienced or witnessed discrimination based on age, race, gender or LGBTQ identity in the workplace

• **1,000,000+** The number of discrimination complaints that have been filed with the EEOC since 2010 (most common: retaliation, racial discrimination, and sex discrimination)

The Washington Post; Glassdoor; The Harris Poll
Implicit Bias

• To have a truly diverse and inclusive workforce, a business needs to have a better understanding about how implicit bias is potentially impacting the organization

• We live in a time where we quickly put people in boxes
What is Implicit Bias?

- The unconscious association of stereotypes with particular groups
- In no way related to a person’s intelligence, cognitive ability, or other personality traits
- People may act on the basis of stereotypes or prejudice without meaning to do so
Identifying & Interrupting Implicit Bias

- **Seven Powerful Bias Interrupters**
  - Give evidence
  - Benefit of the doubt
  - Waiver of objective rules/consistency
  - Likeability, modesty, deference
  - Assumptions regarding parents and what they are able to do
  - “Culture Fit”; “Executive Presence” – What does that mean?
  - Honest feedback
    - Notice
    - Opportunity to correct
Building a Respectful & Inclusive Workplace

- Race
- Gender
- Culture
- Religion
- Ethnicity
- Language
- Education
- Nationality
- Gender Identity
- Physical Abilities
- Sexual Orientation
Challenges to Creating a Respectful Workplace

- Getting used to differences
- Coordinating work styles
- Learning to communicate
- Developing flexibility
- Adapting to change
Manager’s Role in Creating a Respectful Workplace

- Set clear expectations of behavior
- Be a positive role model
- Create a positive work environment
- Make it how you do business
- Push back on disrespectful behaviors
- Maintain open communication
How To Demonstrate Mutual Respect in the Workplace

- Listen to your employees
- Act on your employees’ suggestions
- Give timely praise on a job well done
- Share company mission, vision, goals and objectives
- Learn about your employees’ professional and personal goals
- Celebrate workplace milestones
Tips for Creating a Respectful Workplace

• Respect Differences
• Never Assume
• Encourage Teamwork
• Use the Variety of Experiences Among Coworkers
• Learn – and use – Acceptable Terms

• Treat Genders Equally
• Avoid Sexist Comments
• Show Interest in Coworkers
• Learn Names and Use Them Frequently
• Look at Coworkers’ Abilities – Not Disabilities
By Way of Example, Phrases to be Mindful of . . .

• No offense, but. . .
• Don’t be such a prude
• That was a ballsy move
• Wearing the pants
• Don’t worry your pretty little head
• It’s not a big deal
• Someone is whipped
• Why do all (men/women) . . .
• Grow a pair
• Boys will be boys
• It was just a joke

• Smile
• Working mom (versus working parent)
• When will you take time to start a family?
• For a woman/man you are a great . . .
• Office mom
• It’s time to man up
• Are you sure you can handle this?
• “Debbie Downer” or “Negative Nancy”
Leadership

#1 Practice the qualities of leadership
#2 Create a culture of appreciation and respect
#3 Combat Defensiveness

• Doing so will give you credibility when you need to have a difficult conversation with your employees
Qualities of Leadership

1) **Passion** (You really care about what you are doing)
2) **Humility** (You are not perfect either)
3) **Curiosity** (You do not know everything)
Some Examples

• Acknowledging you need their help
• Focusing on solving problems and not placing blame
• Admitting when you are wrong
• Employees feel that their opinions count
Culture of Appreciation and Respect

• Regularly express appreciation, gratitude, and respect for your employees

• Appreciation is different from Recognition
  • Recognition is an event – e.g. an award for 10 years of service
  • Appreciation – ongoing acknowledgement that we are glad you are here

• The Ten Pennies . . .
Defensiveness

• We all tend to become defensive – it is human nature – when we feel attacked or threatened

• People do not like criticism especially when coupled with a sense of contempt

• Employees tend to react when they are defensive by blaming, minimizing, shifting focus, or shutting down
Combating Defensiveness

• Have compassion
• Genuinely listen and be curious (about their experience and feelings)
• Use “I” or “we” statements, as opposed to “you” statements
• Do not label the person or pass judgment
• Refrain from becoming defensive yourself
• Shift the discussion to finding a resolution
• Do not hesitate to take a break (without blaming the other person)
Perception vs. Intention

• Need to take into account co-workers’ personal history

  • Affects how they perceive each situation
  • “Triggers” can cause well intended behavior to become unwelcome
Perception vs. Intention

• Some gauges to measure whether your own conduct is consistent with the law and your organization’s policies:

  • Would you want your spouse, partner, child, or parent to be subjected to the same type of behavior?
  • Would you be willing to engage in the same conduct in front of a family member?
  • Would you be embarrassed to tell the same story in a courtroom in front of a judge and jury?