

RACIAL & HEALTH EQUITY: Make It Your Business

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**BlueCross
BlueShield**
Minnesota

Learn: Working Across Difference

Working across difference means being able to effectively engage and collaborate across different cultures, races, life experiences and identities. Working across difference in a professional setting can mean creating an inclusive and welcoming environment, where diverse opinions are heard and valued.

Recognizing and valuing difference is essential to creating an inclusive and equitable workplace. Employees of all genders, races, cultures and life experiences should feel respected and valued in the workplace, not just those from the dominant culture.

Working across difference also means recognizing and addressing our own bias and prejudice that shape how we view others. We all have biases, and they can create barriers to teamwork, fostering an inclusive work culture and professional growth.

It is hard to create an inclusive culture that works across difference without representation. Look at the makeup of your company's board, leadership committees and decision makers. Whose voices are the loudest, and whose voices are not being heard? Does your company reflect the community you work in and serve? These are critical questions to ask when we think about effectively working across difference.

Reflect: How Well Do You Work Across Difference?



Do policies in your workplace promote an inclusive and welcoming environment for people of all genders, cultures, races and life experiences? Why or why not?

Does your workplace see difference as an asset or something to be avoided?

Change: Steps Toward Progress



Conduct an Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) assessment of your leaders and employees

The IDI assesses intercultural competence, cultural intelligence and cross-cultural adaptation. These features that have been identified as key capabilities in job performance and organizational effectiveness.

By understanding your IDI score and those of your colleagues, you are better able to know how to communicate with those who have different-lived experiences than you.



Promote understanding through sharing cultural practices and traditions

Working across difference comes from understanding and respecting differences. This can come about through sharing cultural practices and traditions, like hosting events around different holidays like Lunar New Year, Diwali or Ramadan. You can also encourage your employees to attend celebrations or events that are important to different communities. Examples in Minnesota include Somali Independence Day, which falls on July 1, or Juneteenth, which represents independence for Black people.



Don't expect BIPOC employees to do all the work

Often, Black, Indigenous and employees of color find themselves having to educate and bridge gaps of understanding for white employees. This can cause stress, dissatisfaction and burnout. It might be one of the reasons why turnover for BIPOC employees is much higher in most sectors.

Once there is the understanding of the need to work across difference, white employees need to shoulder their responsibility to make BIPOC employees feel included and welcome in the workplace.

Learn More



- <https://hbr.org/2020/06/confronting-racism-at-work-a-reading-list>
- <https://hbr.org/2018/03/diversity-and-authenticity>
- <https://diversityofficermagazine.com/cultural-competence/what-is-cultural-competence-how-is-it-measured-2/>

