



Supervisor NEWSLETTER

Employee Assistance Program
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Importance of Cultural Sensitivity in Today's Workplace

By Indeed Editorial Team

A successful company is collaborative, creative and innovative. To be most effective in these three areas, it's essential to emphasize the importance of inclusiveness and cultural sensitivity in your workplace.

In this article, we explain the importance of cultural sensitivity and offer tips for building and maintaining cultural awareness in the workplace.

What is cultural sensitivity in the workplace?

Cultural sensitivity refers to a person's acceptance and inclusion of people with cultures and cultural identities that differ from their own. This phrase is sometimes interchangeable with the term cultural awareness.

Cultural sensitivity in the workplace is represented through the organizational and interpersonal recognition and appreciation of cultural diversity among professionals. A person or organization's success in developing a culturally sensitive workplace is dependent on their policies and behaviors.

7 reasons why cultural sensitivity is important

Here are seven benefits of prioritizing cultural sensitivity in the workplace:

1. Creates a safe work environment. A safe work environment is one in which employees can complete their tasks and be a part of a team without any risk to

their emotional well-being or physical safety. By creating a culturally sensitive work environment, all people should be able to work freely. Their ideas and input should be carefully considered, and everyone should feel safe to describe their experiences and offer their unique vantage points when considering solutions for challenges or developing new concepts or products.

2. Minimizes bias. Bias is a person's disproportionate tendency to favor or disapprove of an idea, religion, culture, gender, age, ethnicity or orientation. Maintaining cultural sensitivity in the workplace helps to incorporate more viewpoints and spread awareness of different cultural values and identities. A well-established sense of cultural awareness and sensitivity helps to minimize bias in hiring, promotion, termination and decision making.

3. Diversifies and strengthens the talent pool. Practicing cultural sensitivity and cultural awareness improves the hiring process. When a company or organization develops a reputation for providing a safe and open culture that values diversity and each person's unique perspective, more individuals with a wide range of backgrounds will likely seek out employment there.

4. Inspires innovation and creativity. When people feel unafraid to express themselves and speak freely, the environment can become more creative and innovative. Innovation and creativity are key in designing systems, resources and products that benefit companies and individuals.

5. Improves collaboration. A workplace that prioritizes cultural sensitivity and cultural awareness is likely to be more collaborative and more inclusive in the development of projects, products and plans. When people with varied skill sets, backgrounds, cultures and beliefs can effectively work together in a safe environment, they are more likely to be open to each other's ideas and be more receptive to each person's unique position or viewpoint.

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6. Boosts job satisfaction. Job satisfaction refers to a person's feeling of fulfillment and happiness at work. Workplace satisfaction is crucial for developing and maintaining people's motivation and drive, and it's likely to reduce turnover. Increased motivation and collaboration in conjunction with less frequent turnover can boost productivity and may even increase revenue.

7. Increases audience engagement. Most companies produce products, systems, solutions or content that is targeted toward one or more specific audiences. Typically, a company's success is hinged on its ability to reach and understand its audience—and limiting the scope of that market may also limit the scope of sales, brand awareness and revenue.

Cultural sensitivity helps to broaden market reach and increase audience engagement through effective collaboration. Team members can use the breadth of their life experiences to help reach more people and avoid isolating groups or individuals.

How to build cultural awareness in the workplace

Here are four ways you can help to build a more culturally sensitive work environment:

1. Celebrate cultural differences. Show the people around you that you care about their distinguishing qualities and backgrounds by celebrating cultural differences. Make an effort to learn about people's beliefs and traditions, and ask others about the things they value.

If you know that someone is celebrating a holiday, wish them well. Also, if you learn that someone is participating in an event related to their cultural identity, be respectful and polite. Ask thoughtful questions and make connections to your own experiences. By making an effort to learn about other people's backgrounds and cultures, you can add to positive workplace culture and climate.

2. Prioritize fairness and inclusion. Whether you're a manager, team leader or entry-level employee, you can contribute to a more culturally sensitive workplace by prioritizing fairness and inclusion. Act with kindness and openness when speaking with everyone at work, and when participating in collaborative groups or designing teams, remember to let everyone's voice be heard.

You can go a step further by making inclusivity a part of your professional brand. Let people know that fairness is

important to you and be an advocate for equality. Doing this helps people around you to feel safe and valued, and it's likely to inspire more people to do the same.

3. Seek out cultural sensitivity training. Cultural sensitivity training is a series of educational workshops, modules or presentations that are designed to increase people's cultural awareness and appreciation of others. There are many reliable resources available for individual people who wish to learn. Using this training, people can learn a lot about how to best celebrate and respect each other's differences.

You can also ask about joining or starting a cultural awareness cohort or team. Asking for cultural sensitivity training or asking to be a part of a group dedicated to cultural awareness shows your commitment to professional growth, equality and teamwork.

4. Practice active listening. It's important that people from all cultural backgrounds feel heard and encouraged to express themselves at work. When people speak about their life experiences, be open to their ideas.

You can practice active listening by focusing on people when they speak, trying to maintain eye contact and waiting for them to complete their thoughts. Ask engaging and clarifying questions to show your interest and make sure you fully understand what they're saying.

References:

<https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/career-development/importance-of-cultural-sensitivity>