



Workplace Diversity

by
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Dedication

Mom, I am doing all I can to make sure your life wasn't in vain.
Your legacy will live on.
I miss you more than I can find the words to write.

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Every new beginning comes from some other beginning's end.

Seneca

Preface

Improving diversity knowledge is a required component of every company. With more and more businesses having global presence workplace diversity is a forgone conclusion. You will be able to use strategies to be proactive and remove barriers. You will be shown how to build and encourage diversity in your workplace and community.

If we cannot end now our differences, at least we can help make the world safe for diversity.

John F. Kennedy

Chapter One: Understanding Diversity

What is Diversity? Diversity is the inclusion of a wide variety of people of different races or cultures in a group or organization. It is vital that every employer and employee has an understanding of the concepts diversity.

Related Terms and Concepts

When learning about diversity, it is important to understand its terms and conceptual ideas.

- **Ableism.** Discriminatory beliefs and behaviors directed against people with disabilities.
- **Affirmative Action.** Policies that take race, ethnicity, or gender into consideration in an attempt to promote equal opportunity or increase ethnic or other forms of diversity.
- **Ageism.** Discriminatory beliefs and behaviors directed against people because of their age.
- **Anti-Semitism.** Discriminatory beliefs and behaviors directed against Jews.
- **Anti-Arab discrimination.** Discriminatory beliefs and behaviors directed against Arabs.
- **Classicism.** Discriminatory beliefs and behaviors based on differences in social class, generally directed against those from poorer and/or working-class backgrounds.

- **Culture.** The ever-changing values, traditions, social and political relationships, and worldview shared by a group of people bound together by a combination of factors that can include a common history, geographic location, language, social class, and it were a religion.
- **Discrimination.** The same kind of belief systems and behaviors, both personal and institutional, directed against individuals or groups based on their gender, ethnic group, social class, language, or other perceived differences.
- **Ethnocentrism.** Discriminatory beliefs and behaviors based on ethnic differences.
- **Heterosexism.** Discriminatory beliefs and behaviors directed against gay men, lesbians, and trans-genders.
- **Minorities.** A part of a population differing from others in some characteristics, and often subjected to differential treatment
- **Multiculturalism.** The acceptance of multiple ethnic cultures, for practical reasons and/or for the sake of diversity and applied to the demographic make-up of a specific place
- **Racism.** A system of privilege and penalty based on one's race
- **Sexism.** Discriminatory beliefs and behaviors directed against women.

A Brief History

Racial and ethnic minorities in the United States have been faced with legal and social exclusion for much of the 21st century. Labor shortages during the Second World War created some new work opportunities for African Americans and women. Even with this progress, however, the labor market still provided preferential treatment to men. Women, if provided opportunities, were not taken seriously --and were paid far less for performing the same jobs. African-Americans, Asians, and Hispanics continued to have lower social status and work opportunities and status.

The notable *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* United States Supreme Court decision in 1954 declared that state laws that had created separate public schools for black and white students denied black children equal educational opportunities. In a unanimous decision, justices stated that "separate educational facilities are inherently unequal." As a result, racial segregation was ruled a violation of the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment of the United States Constitution.

In December 1955, Rosa Parks, an African American woman, refused to relinquish her seat on a bus to a white man in Montgomery, Alabama. Her arrest prompted a group of black citizens to initiate a one-day boycott of the public bus system, leading to picketing and a year-long boycott of the Montgomery public bus system and selected merchants. As a result, the public bus system was desegregated. A Baptist minister, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., helped to organize the boycott and by 1957, Dr. King's Southern Christian Leadership Conference began to work for equal rights across the South.

In September 1957, angry white mobs in Little Rock, Arkansas, opposing the court ordered desegregation of public schools, threaten violence. President Dwight D. Eisenhower orders federal troops to protect nine black students integrating Central High School in Little Rock.

The 1954 Supreme Court decision, these events, and several other landmark cases served as the foundation for integration initiatives and the civil rights movement. But even after passage of civil rights laws beginning in the 1960s, equal opportunity initiatives for minorities and women were not prevalent. Because prejudice can take on many subtle, yet effective forms, private and public institutions remained all-white or all-male long after court decisions or statutes formally ended discrimination.

Both the courts and Republican and Democratic administrations looked to race and gender-conscious remedies to end persistent discrimination. President John F. Kennedy created a Committee on Equal Employment Opportunity in 1961 and designated the term "affirmative action" for measures designed to achieve non-discrimination, Title VII was enacted as part of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, ending discrimination by large private employers -- whether or not they had government contracts. . In 1965, President Lyndon Johnson issued an executive order requiring federal contractors to take affirmative action to ensure equality of employment opportunity without regard to race, religion and national origin. (Gender was later added.)

The EEOC

Congress established the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) in 1964 to enforce Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) is charged with enforcing anti-discrimination laws by preventing employment discrimination and resolving complaints. The Act is designed to make employees whole for illegal discrimination -- and to encourage employers to end discrimination. The EEOC is composed of five Commissioners and a General Counsel appointed by the President and confirmed by the Senate. Commissioners are appointed for five-year staggered terms; the General Counsel's term is four years. The President designates a Chair and a Vice-Chair. The Chair is the chief executive officer of the Commission. The Commission has authority to establish equal employment policy and to approve litigation. The General Counsel is responsible for conducting litigation. The EEOC carries out its enforcement, education, and technical assistance activities through fifty field offices serving every part of the nation.

In June, 1965, President Lyndon B. Johnson appointed Franklin D. Roosevelt, Jr. as the first Chairman of the EEOC. Serving with him were Commissioners Richard Graham, Aileen Hernandez, Luther Holcomb, and Samuel C. Jackson. Charles T. Duncan, an African American Howard University law professor, was appointed as the first General Counsel of the EEOC.

After that, important civil rights organizations formed, or grew in scope. The National Organization for Women (NOW) was founded in 1966. New initiatives for the National Association of the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), founded in 1909 include Heading into the 21st century, the NAACP include focusing on disparities in economics, health care, education, voter empowerment and the criminal justice system while also continuing its role as legal advocate for civil rights issues. The AARP, founded in 1958, has also continued to be active to help members over fifty with age-related work issues. There are also several Hispanic organizations promotion civil rights and equality in the workplace such as the League of United Latin American Citizens.

A Legal Overview

Below is a history of important federal United States laws enacted to prohibit job discrimination.

Law	Year	Purpose
The Civil Rights Act	1964	Prohibits discrimination in a broad array of private conduct including public accommodations, governmental services and education
Title VII of the Civil Rights Act (Title VII)	1964	Prohibits employment discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, or national origin
Equal Pay Act (EPA)	1963	Protects men and women who perform substantially equal work in the same establishment from sex-based wage discrimination
Age Discrimination in Employment Act (ADEA)	1967	Protects individuals who are 40 years of age or older
Equal Employment Opportunity Act	1972	Provides the right to equal job opportunities, and gives the EEOC the authority to "back up" its administrative findings and to increase the jurisdiction and reach of the agency

Sections 501 and 505 of the Rehabilitation Act	1973	Prohibits discrimination against qualified individuals with disabilities who work
Civil Service Reform Act (CSRA)	1978	Prohibits any employee who has authority to take certain personnel actions from discriminating for or against employees or applicants for employment on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age or disability. Also provides that certain personnel actions cannot be based on attributes or conduct that do not adversely affect employee performance, such as marital status and political affiliation
Title I and Title V of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)	1990	Prohibits employment discrimination against qualified individuals with disabilities in the private sector, and in state and local governments
Civil Rights Act	1991	Provides monetary damages in cases of intentional employment discrimination

Family Leave and Medical Act (FMLA)	1993	Allows employees up to 12 weeks of unpaid leave in any 12-month period for the birth or adoption of a child, to care for a family member, or if the employee has a serious health problem. Applies only in companies with fifty or more employees.
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In the ensuing years, these laws have been continually amended to expand the protections offered to more workers in a wider variety of employer sizes and conditions.

Practical Illustration

Harold walked into the break room to use the microwave. He overheard two of his co-workers, talking. Their conversation turned to other staff members, and Harold overheard one of them say, "I don't think Jamal's very bright. I don't know how he keeps his job here."

The other said, "He only keeps his job here because of his skin color."

Harold blinked, taken aback. He walked up to his two co-workers and said, "The comment you made is offensive, and there are laws against speaking about co-workers that way. I'd leave that kind of talk out of the workplace if I were you."

The two co-workers looked embarrassed. They apologized for their statement and reassured Harold that he wouldn't hear comments like that again in the workplace.

We all should know that diversity makes for a rich tapestry, and we must understand that all the threads of the tapestry are equal in value no matter what their color.

Maya Angelou

Chapter Two: Understanding Stereotypes

Everybody is different and we encounter a diverse set of people every day. Some differences cannot be seen by just looking at a person. Treat each and every person you encounter with respect and dignity. Through this chapter we will begin to identify what if any stereotypes a person may have.

Stereotypes vs. Biases

A stereotype is a conventional, formulaic, and oversimplified conception, opinion, or image. One who stereotypes generally thinks that most or all members of an ethnic or racial group are the same. Typical words used with stereotyping include: clannish, aggressive, blue-collar, lazy.

Bias is a preference or an inclination, especially one that inhibits impartial judgment. The use of bias is more subtle. Often it is evident through the addition of qualifiers or added information to spoken statements. For example, you may hear “Jane González, who has a degree, will be joining our staff”, implying that having a degree sets this individual apart from most Hispanics, who may not have degrees.

Identifying Your Baggage

Baggage is defined as intangible things (as feelings, circumstances, or beliefs) that get in the way.

From an early age, you learn to place people and objects into categories. As you grow up and are influenced by parents, peers, and the media, your tendency to label different racial, cultural, or other groups as superior or inferior increases significantly. This can be referred to as your baggage.

Though often you are unaware of what constitutes your baggage, you can begin to uncover it by monitoring your thoughts when you encounter an ethnic last name, see a skin color, hear an accent different than yours, interact with someone who has a disability, or learn that a person is gay.

As these events occur, look for consistency. Do you have the same reaction to members of a given group each time you encounter him or her? Ask yourself: "Do I have these reactions before -- or after I have a chance to know the individual?" If the answer is before, these are your stereotypes. Work to label these automatic responses as stereotypes and remind yourself that they are not valid indicators of one's character, skills, or personality. Because stereotyping is a learned habit, it can be unlearned with practice. And remember not to judge yourself; a thought is private, and not an action.

Understanding What This Means

Knowing as much as you can about your own ethnocentrism helps you recognize how discomfort with differences can prevent you from seeing others as "fully human". With practice, you can identify feelings and thoughts, filtering them through a system of questions designed to help you change your baggage, or perceptions.

Practical Illustration

Betsy sat down with her co-worker, Mark, to go over their sales reports. "As you can see here, profits have gone up from last quarter."

Mark pointed and said, "It says there that the profits doubled from \$1,000 to \$3,000. Don't you mean \$2,000?"

Betsy looked at the chart. "Yes, you're right. It should be \$2,000."

Without thinking, Mark said, "That's okay. A lot of girls just aren't good at math."

Betsy was taken aback by his statement, and she said, "Mark, that was hurtful. It makes me feel like you're stereotyping me, when it was just a typo."

Mark seemed surprised to hear this, but then said, "I'm sorry, Betsy. I didn't mean it that way. I won't say anything like that again."

They continued on with their work and gave an excellent presentation the next day.

*We have become not a melting pot but a beautiful mosaic.
Different people, different beliefs, different yearnings, different
hopes, different dreams.*

Jimmy Carter

Chapter Three: Breaking Down the Barriers

We are each responsible for changing our stereotypes and breaking down the barriers.

Are your own assumptions based on things you have heard from others, in school, TV, or the movies? Is it possible that some of your negative images are incorrect -- at least for some people in a certain group? Rather than making sweeping generalizations, try to get to know people as individuals. Just as that will reduce the stereotypes you hold of others, it is also likely to help reduce the stereotypes others hold of you.

Changing Your Personal Approach

Once you've identified and understand your baggage, what do you do to make changes? Often, the beliefs you hold are the result of your own cultural conditioning; they determine whether you will seek rapport with individuals who are different from you.

The first step is acknowledging that you're human, will probably make some mistakes, and likely do have some stereotypes. Next, work to become more aware of your inner thoughts and feelings -- and how they affect your beliefs and actions.

We typically make a judgment about someone in less than 30 seconds. To change your personal approach to diversity, try these steps when you make contact with a new person:

1. Collect information
2. Divide out the facts from your opinions, theories, and suppositions
3. Make judgment based only on the facts
4. Periodically refine your judgment based on the facts
5. Try to continue expanding your opinion of the person's potential.

When you have a stereotypical thought about a group that is different from you, follow it up with an alternative thought based on factual information that discounts the stereotype. Engage in honest dialogue with others about race that at times might be difficult, risky, or uncomfortable, and look for media portrayals of different races that are realistic and positive.

Possible answers:

- Seek information to enhance your own awareness and understanding of discrimination
- Spend some time looking at your own attitudes and behaviors as they contribute to discrimination within and around you
- Evaluate your use of terms, phrases, or behaviors that may be perceived by others as degrading or hurtful

- Openly confront a discriminatory comment, joke, or action among those around you
- Risk a positive stand against discrimination when the opportunity occurs
- Become increasingly aware of discriminatory TV programs, advertising, news broadcasts, holiday observations, slogans, and other venues
- Investigate and evaluate political candidates at all levels regarding their stance and activity against discrimination
- Contribute time and/or money to an agency, fund, or program that actively confronts the problems of discrimination
- Sever your affiliation with organizations that have discriminatory membership requirements
- Read publications to educate yourself in the area of a culture other than your own
- Learn some of the language of those in your community who speak other than standard English

Encouraging Workplace Changes

Diversity initiatives usually start at the top of an organization, but change can be affected from any level. If you work in human resources, or in a functional position of authority, consider performing a cultural audit to describe the overall working environment, unwritten norms, possible barriers, and the existence of race, gender, and class issues.

- Learn about the values and beliefs of others in the organization. Be alert for biases and stereotypes
- Identify ways to value uniqueness among your colleagues
- Watch for changes in relationships. Is there hostility among co-workers? What distinguishing background characteristics do you notice?
- Suggest and take steps to implement discussions or workshops aimed at understanding and eliminating discrimination with friends, colleagues, social clubs, or religious groups
- Leave copies of publications that educate about diversity in sight where your friends and associates might see them and question your interests

Encouraging Social Changes

Below are several suggestions to encourage breaking down stereotypical barriers in social, community, and other non-work settings.

- Suggest and take steps to implement discussions or workshops aimed at understanding and eliminating discrimination with friends, colleagues, social clubs, or religious groups
- Investigate the curricula of local schools in terms of their treatment of the issues of discrimination (also discrimination in textbooks, assemblies, faculty, staff, administration, and athletic programs and directors)
- Evaluate your buying habits so that you do not support shops, companies, or personnel that follow discriminatory practices

As you gain more awareness and knowledge about groups different than you, not only will your stereotypes lessen, but you will also become better equipped to educate and challenge others about their stereotypes.

Practical Illustration

Malik was listening to a presentation given by Gabriella. Gabriella said, "When working with Hispanic clients, remember to be culturally competent." She spoke about Hispanic beliefs about illness, ideas of spirit possession and exorcism, and comfort from religious faith.

Malik found himself thinking, 'Of course, Gabriella believes we should act this way. She's Hispanic herself.'

He blinked, remembering from the last chapter of the Diversity training on stereotypical thoughts.

By chance, Gabriella addressed him in front of the group. "What do you think about this idea, Malik?"

He paused, remembering what he'd learned, and said, "I think all our clients need to feel like they are seen as individuals by us. It's important for clients of any race or background to feel comfortable within our office."

I have come to believe over and over again that what is most important to me must be spoken, made verbal and shared, even at the risk of having it bruised or misunderstood.

Audre Lorde

Chapter Four: Verbal Communication Skills

Words are a powerful tool. Knowing how we use words to communicate is vital in understanding where it fits into diversity. Saying the right thing or even more important not saying the wrong thing will help you in your everyday life. Through this chapter we will touch on differences between listening and hearing, and asking the right questions and communicating with power.

Listening and Hearing; They Aren't the Same Thing

Hearing is the act of perceiving sound by the ear. Assuming an individual is not hearing-impaired, hearing simply happens. However listening is something that one consciously chooses to do. It requires concentration to allow the brain to process the meaning from words and sentences.

Listening leads to learning, but this is not always an easy task. Adults speak at a normal rate of 100-150 words per minute. The brain, however, can think at 400-500 words per minute, leaving extra time for daydreaming, or anticipating the speaker's next words.

Listening Skills

Listening skills can be learned and refined. The art of active listening allows you to fully receive a message from another person. Especially during a conversation with someone who has a different accent or perhaps a speech impediment. Active listening allows you to be sensitive to the multiple dimensions of the communication that make up an entire message. These listening dimensions include:

- What is the reason the person is communicating with me now?
- What does the length of the message tell me about its importance?
- How is the message being made?
- What clues do the loudness and speed of speaking give me?
- How do pauses and hesitations enhance or detract from the message?
- What do eye contact, posture, or facial expressions tell me that perhaps words do not?

Barriers to Effective Listening

In order to listen effectively, one must overcome several barriers to receiving the message:

- The message content
- The appeal of the speaker
- Any external distractions
- Emotional interjections
- The level of clarity in the language
- Perceiving only parts of the message selectively
- The absence of or poor, inappropriate feedback

Communication at Meetings

People from some cultural groups prefer in-person meetings more than other groups. Face-to-Face meetings are more important to people from Africa, East, South and Central Asia, and the Middle East and Arabic countries. Virtual (electronic) meetings work for Latin Americans, and people from Europe, Australia, and North America.

Using an Interpreter

There may be times -- especially if you work in an organization with locations around the world -- which the use of an interpreter can help overcome language barriers as everyone listens. This reduces frustration with the communication process, and allows participants to stay focused on understanding the messages.

Asking Questions

Especially when communicating interpersonally in a diverse workplace environment, good question-asking skills are critical so that the message you are receiving is accurate and complete.

Active listeners use specific questioning techniques to elicit more information from speakers. Below are three types of questions to use when practicing active listening.

Open Questions

Using an open question stimulates thinking and discussion or responses, including opinions or feelings. Open questions pass control of the conversation to the respondent. Leading words in open questions include: *Why, what, or how*, as in the following examples:

- What are our benchmarks for improving our diversity training?

How are we conducting diversity initiatives in our organization?

Clarifying Questions

Asking a clarifying question helps to remove ambiguity, elicits additional detail, and guides the answer to a question. Frame your question as someone trying to understand in more detail. Often asking for a specific example is useful. This also helps the speaker evaluate his or her own opinions and perspective. Below are some examples:

- I'm not sure I understood that correctly. How will we deliver the online training?
- I heard your proposed budget number, but what sort of diversity program training chapters can we really afford?

Closed Questions

Closed questions usually require a one-word answer, and effectively shut off discussion. Closed questions provide facts, allow the questioner to maintain control of the conversation, and are easy to answer. Typical leading words are: *Is, can, how many, when, or does*. While closed questions are not the optimum choice for active listening, at times they are necessary, and may be helpful when you are interacting with someone who speaks in a different language or who has a speech impediment. Examples of closed questions are:

- Do we have a diversity program at our company?
- When will the new inclusivity training course be launched?

Communicating With Power

It's been said that you have between thirty seconds and two minutes to capture your participants' attention. In a diverse cultural work environment, this time frame is even more challenging.

In addition to voice characteristics, there are methods you can use to make communication with a non-English speaking person – or a hearing impaired person more efficient and message-effective.

Ten Tips for Communicating With a non- Native English Speaker

1. Make clear eye contact, right from the beginning.
2. Speak a bit more slowly than you normally do so the non-native speaker or hearing impaired person can keep pace with you.
3. Enhance your message with facial expressions that convey emotions such as joy, frustration, fright, or anger.
4. Try different words that accomplish the same purpose. Many people from different cultures have a passive knowledge of English gained through the media. Try saying a word slowly or with a different pronunciation.
5. Draw a concept if you realize that words alone are not conveying it. Repeat the word or phrase as you draw.
6. Confirm meanings by using an open-ended question or command such as “Please say back to me what we discussed”.
7. Enlist the assistance of a translator if necessary.
8. Be patient; the key to overcoming a language barrier is patience.
9. Use short words and short sentences. Keep your words very literal.
10. Avoid slang (technical person, instead of “geek”) and contractions (do not, instead of don’t).

Seven Suggestions for Communicating with a Person who is Hearing Impaired

1. Attract the listener's attention
2. Speak clearly and naturally
3. Move closer
4. Face the listener
5. Take the surroundings into account
6. Understand that using hearing instruments can be tiring
7. Restate your message

Voice

38% of a particular message received by a listener is governed by the tone and quality of your voice. The pitch, volume, and control of your voice all make a difference in how your message is perceived by your audience.

Characteristics	Description	Tips
Pitch	How high or low your voice is	Avoid a high-pitched sound. Speak from your stomach, the location of your diaphragm
Volume	The loudness of your voice must be governed by your diaphragm	Speak through your diaphragm, not your throat

Quality	The color, warmth, and meaning given to your voice	Add emotion to your voice Smile as much as possible when you are speaking
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Practical Illustration

Greg sat down for a meeting with Karnell. Karnell worked at their branch in India and was working at their location for the next few months. While Karnell spoke English fluently, Greg sometimes had a difficult time understanding his wording due to his accent.

Greg kept eye-contact with Karnell. He spoke more slowly and enunciated his words a little more than he would have normally. He exaggerated his expression slightly at times to convey his meaning, but most of all, he was very patient.

At the end of the meeting, Greg asked, “Karnell, please say back to me what we discussed. I want to make sure we’re both clear about our next steps.”

Karnell repeated back what they had discussed. Greg and Karnell both looked forward to their next meeting.

Deafness has left me acutely aware of both the duplicity that language is capable of and the many expressions the body cannot hide.

Terry Galloway

Chapter Five: Non-Verbal Communication Skills

We all communicate nonverbally. The image that we project from our nonverbal communication affects the way that our spoken communication is received. While interpreting body language is important, it is equally important to understand what your nonverbal communication is telling others. It takes more than words to persuade others.

Body Language

Body language is a form of non-verbal communication involving the use of stylized gestures, postures, and physiologic signs that act as cues to other people. Humans unconsciously send and receive non-verbal signals through body language all the time.

One study at UCLA found that up to 93 percent of American communication effectiveness is determined by nonverbal cues. Another study indicated that the impact of a performance was determined 7 percent by the words used, 38 percent by voice quality, and 55 percent by non-verbal communication. Your body language must match the words you use. If a conflict arises between your words and your body language, your body language governs.

Below are examples of positive and negative body language in American culture.

Positive Body Language	Negative Body Language
Direct eye contact	No eye contact
Warm, open smile	Tight facial features; no smile
Fully facing	Angled away
Nodding	Staring
Tilting the head	Fidgeting
Leaning over sitting forward	Slouching
Upright, relaxed posture	Hunched shoulders
Feet planted firmly on the ground	Body sagging
Firm handshake	Weak handshake

Just as with spoken language, each country in the world has its own forms of acceptable and unacceptable body language based on local cultural norms.

The Signals You Send to Others

Signals are movements used to communicate needs, desires, and feelings to others. They are a form of expressive communication. More than 75% of the signals you send to others are non-verbal.

People who are strong, culturally aware communicators display sensitivity to the power of the emotions and thoughts communicated non-verbally through signals.

Any nonverbal signals you send to others should match your words. Otherwise, people will tend to pay less attention to what you said, and focus instead on your nonverbal signals.

Eye Contact

- For Americans, direct eye contact indicates that a person is confident and favorable
- Africans typically look down when they are listening, and look up when they are speaking
- In China, a lack of eye contact may indicate a show of respect
- For a Navajo Indian, a lack of eye contact may mean avoiding a loss of soul, or avoiding a theft.

Posture

- Slouching is considered rude in northern Europe
- Bowing shows respect in Asia
- Sitting with one's legs crossed is offensive in Turkey and Ghana.

Gestures

A gesture is a motion of the limbs or body made to express or help express a thought or to emphasize speech. Without gestures, our speech would not be very exciting or expressive. However just as with language, the social acceptability of gestures varies greatly according to cultural norms.

In the U. S., we point with our index finger. In Germany, the little finger is used, and Japanese point with the entire hand.

It's Not What You Say, It's How You Say It

In workplace communication, it is important that your voice sounds upbeat, warm, under control, and clear. This is especially true when you are interacting with someone from a different culture, or who is speaking with you in a different language. Below are some tips to help you begin the process.

1. Breathe from your diaphragm
2. Drink plenty of water to stay hydrated; avoid caffeine because of its diuretic effects
3. Posture affects breathing, and also tone of voice, so be sure to stand up straight
4. To warm up the tone of your voice, smile
5. If you have a voice that is particularly high or low, exercise its by practicing speaking on a sliding scale. You can also sing to expand the range of your voice
6. Record your voice and listen to the playback
7. Deeper voices are more credible than higher pitched voices. Try speaking in a slightly lower octave. It will take some practice, but with a payoff, just as radio personalities have learned
8. Enlist a colleague or family member to get feedback about the tone of your voice.

Practical Illustration

Karen spoke with one of her employees, Elizabeth, about a new project that she needed her to undertake.

Karen noticed something and said, “Elizabeth, even though you’ve only said positive things during our meeting, I noticed that you slouched your shoulders and sighed in a heavy way. Is there anything you want to tell me?”

Elizabeth said, “I am excited about this project. I just know that it will be difficult to make sure I meet this project’s deadlines as well as other deadlines that I have coming up.”

Karen said, “I’m glad you said something. Here let’s see if there are any deadlines we can extend.” Karen added, “While your body language did a lot of the speaking for you, it’s better to say what’s on your mind, so there’s no confusion.”

Elizabeth agreed to be more direct in the future, and they planned their next meeting.

Race prejudice is not only a shadow over the colored--it is a shadow over all of us, and the shadow is darkest over those who feel it least and allow its evil effects to go on.

Pearl S. Buck

Chapter Six: Being Proactive

Organizations who address diversity proactively will have the most success implementing and enhancing diversity programs.

Encouraging Diversity in the Workplace

There are many compelling reasons to encourage diversity in the workplace. A diversity program offers the following benefits to an organization:

- Increased productivity
- Fewer lawsuits
- Retention and growth of the business
- Increasing marketing capabilities
- The fostering of a wider talent pool
- Becoming and being perceived as an employer of choice
- Better morale
- Increased creativity of the workforce
- Improved decision-making processes and capabilities.

Several key traits are common to successful organizations that encourage and support diversity in their workplaces. They:

- Behave proactively
- Support top-down, leadership-driven initiatives, clearly communicated throughout the organization
- Promote ownership of issues throughout the organization
- Think and behave inclusively
- Make diversity a part of as many initiatives as possible.

A strategic plan allows the organization to begin to work the vision initiatives. This task may be handled by a task force, or a change management team, or a diversity council. Having a diversity council (or similar group) is often a good approach, because its members represent diverse ethnic and other groups. They serve in an ongoing role, advising about -- and even overseeing -- diversity initiatives.

Conducting a Diversity Audit

The diversity council or team will want to conduct a diversity audit to gauge where the organization is now, and where it wants to be. Audits typically consist of three parts: a document review, one or more surveys, and focus groups. Typical projects that emerge after a diversity audit include:

- Creation of a corporate diversity policy
- Diversity awareness training

- Revision or enhancement of a job development system using neutral language about diverse groups
- Use of job postings to attract diverse talent to new or open positions
- Marketing and promotion of the diversity program without and outside the company using the corporate intranet (internal) and extranet (public web site).

Building a Diversity Training Program

Often the next step is to conduct a needs analysis and create a diversity awareness training program. It typically includes topics such as:

- Why implement a diversity program in the organization?
- The dynamics of discrimination
- Results of the initial diversity audit
- Understanding the issues of discrimination and the investigation process
- Creating an inclusionary culture
- Action plans for personal and workgroup follow-up.

Other, more specific courses may follow, dealing with topics such as culture bias, or management training specific to diversity. Organizations may also set up mentoring programs, designate an affirmative action officer, or create outreach programs to inform its constituency of its work -- and to help to attract a diverse talent pool.

Instituting Diversity Recruitment

To build a diverse workforce, an organization must have a broad candidate pool. Some initiatives to consider are to:

- Maintain a list of educational institutions with a qualified and diverse student body
- Model the diversity of the organization to potential recruitment sources
- Utilize a diverse recruiting team so that the organization is appealing to candidates
- Perform recruiting outreach in potential recruiting communities
- Employ a wide range of advertising venues
- Make sure the website explains and celebrates the diversity program
- Seek out internal employees and liaise with suppliers and vendors to identify appropriate candidates.

Large organizations in the United States who are known for proactive diversity initiatives undertaken over a period of time and with significant change management activity include Xerox, American Express, Digital, Pepsi, and the federal government. While these large organizations have spent significant dollars, many activities to foster diversity in the workplace cost little or nothing -- and can be undertaken by organizations of any size.

Preventing Discrimination

To prevent discrimination from occurring, you must take firm steps within your organization to educate managers and employees about what constitutes discrimination and how people must behave in order to avoid committing discriminatory actions.

Actions

- Make sure you understand federal laws, and any additional laws enacted in your state. In a larger organization, look to the human resources department to provide up-to-date information. If you work in a smaller organization, visit web sites to keep up with them yourself, and purchase books or periodicals.
- Maintain open communications about fairness, diversity, and discrimination.
- Work to understand the unique needs of each ethnic, cultural, disability or lifestyle group.
- Consider joining a professional organization such as the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM), where cost-effective resources, forums and industry networking opportunities are available. Visit www.shrm.org for more information.

Policy development

The organization should develop the following policies.

Anti-discrimination: Define discrimination. Include language about prohibited conduct, complaint procedures, intolerance of retaliation, responsibilities of managers, and corrective action the company will take with anyone who violates the policy.

Anti-harassment: Define harassment, clearly state it is prohibited, describe the complaint procedure, explain that retaliation is prohibited, lay out managers' responsibilities, and explain what process the organization will follow for investigation and corrective action.

Other Policies: Similarly, create and publish policies for complaints, anti-violence, and how your organization handles open door procedures so communications can flow between employees and management.

Ways to Discourage Discrimination

Even with strong prevention initiatives in place, discrimination occurs. Organizations have formal and informal systems. While the formal systems ensure that policies are written and decisions are implemented, informal or individual systems govern the interaction between members of the workforce and in day-to-day practices.

Hiring practices provide an example. If a candidate is brought in based on the referral of a hiring manager, the opportunity for human resources to recruit a diverse pool of people is diminished. Likewise, challenging or desiring work assignments that come through people in positions of power in an organization often go to similar people, excluding opportunities for other employees potentially equally or better qualified.

Below are several tips for stemming potential discriminatory or offensive behaviors and actions:

- Always work within the framework of federal and state laws.
- If you hear or observe something questionable or disconcerting, speak up. If you are in a group setting, discuss the issue in a proactive way, rather than pinpointing specific individuals.
- Understand the unique needs of each ethnic, cultural, disability or lifestyle group.
- Create an atmosphere where protected group members feel comfortable.

Practical Illustration

Rashid called his team together and he said, “I noticed from the last diversity training that it seemed as though many of us didn’t fully understand all the rules, laws, and policies on diversity in our company. We are a very culturally competent staff, and I believe we can become even more knowledgeable about diversity. I know we’ve talked about building a diversity council in the past. While we’ve never fully gotten a council off the ground, there’s no time like the present. Is there anyone who will volunteer to be on the council as well as help promote its helpfulness in the workplace?”

Rashid smiled at his team as he saw three hands and then a fourth hand go up, volunteering for the job.

*Prejudice, not being founded on reason,
cannot be removed by argument.*

Samuel Johnson

Chapter Seven: Coping with Discrimination

One only has to check the EEOC web site to know that in spite of laws and significant progress against discrimination in the U.S. workplace, it is still pervasive. If you feel that you have been a victim of discrimination, there are actions you can take to gather data and protect yourself.

Identifying If You Have Been Discriminated Against

Knowing Your Workplace Rights

Depending on the size of your employer, where you live in, and your profession, you may be entitled to certain legal protections in the workplace, including:

- The right not be discriminated against because of your race, national origin, skin color, gender, pregnancy, religious beliefs, disability, or age (and in some countries, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity, or other characteristics).
- The right to work in an environment free of harassment.
- Fair pay; to be paid at least the minimum wage, plus, for some job classifications, an overtime premium for any hours worked over forty in one week (or, in some places, over eight hours in one day).
- A safe workplace.

- The right to take leave to care for your own or a family member's serious health condition, or following the birth or adoption of a child.

Potential Signs of Discrimination

Demographics: If where you live -- and the industry in which you work -- have a high percentage of a particular ethnic group, but its members are not hired, this could indicate institutional racism.

Promotions: If specific ethnic groups are not being awarded promotions despite having apparent qualifications and getting good interviews, this could be a sign of discrimination. However, you would have to try to discern whether the particular ethnic groups' individuals are the best candidates for the promotional opportunities.

High Turnover for Minorities: If members of a particular ethnic group are experiencing high turnover, this can indicate that the environment is not conducive to diversity, and can suggest discrimination.

Wage Discrimination. A wage survey could determine if there is discrimination in the wages offered to a particular group of employees. Any differences should be normalized based on education levels, experience and work performance. Once accomplished, wages should be similar. It is possible that some employers offer less to members of certain groups -- no matter what their qualifications are.

Individual Stories and Experiences: Often colleagues who have submitted bids for a job posting will compare notes once the job has been awarded.

Examples of Potential Discrimination

Below are several examples that may be indicative of workplace discrimination:

- For the same infraction, one employee receives a warning, whereas another is fired.
- At a large retail company, saleswomen are paid less per hour for work in the same job description as salesmen.
- Engineers over age fifty at an aerospace company are not invited to training programs for new technology.
- A computer programmer who became blind is not provided screen reader equipment by her employer.

Finally, find and read your organization's discrimination and complaint policy, if one exists.

Methods of Reprisal

Reprisal is retaliation for an injury with the intent of inflicting at least as much injury in return. Retaliation occurs when an employer, employment agency, or labor organization takes an adverse action against a covered individual because he or she engaged in a protected activity.

The EEOC (www.EEOC.gov) describes retaliation as follows: "An employer may not fire, demote, harass, or otherwise "retaliate" against an individual for filing a charge of discrimination, participating in a discrimination proceeding, or otherwise opposing discrimination. The same laws that prohibit discrimination based on race, color, sex, religion, national origin, age, and disability, as well as wage differences between men and

women performing substantially equal work, also prohibit retaliation against individuals who oppose unlawful discrimination or participate in an employment discrimination proceeding.” Examples include:

- Termination or disciplinary action
- Denying a promotion for which the employee was in line
- Threatening the employee who files the complaint
- Assigning more unfavorable tasks or duties than was normal for the employee previous to filing the charge, or than are currently normal for other employees
- Giving the employee a poor performance review after the charge is filed, especially when previous performance evaluations were positive
- Failing to give a raise otherwise due, such as a seniority raise
- Refusing to communicate with the employee
- Providing close supervision, especially if it was absent before
- Enforcing work rules previously not enforced -- or loosely enforced
- Encouraging other employees to shun the person
- Making jokes or comments about anything related to discrimination

- Moralizing, criticizing, or implying disappointment for filing a charge
- Any other action such as an assault or unfounded civil or criminal charges which are likely to deter reasonable people from pursuing their rights.

Choosing a Course of Action

If you suspect that you are being discriminated against, gather and write down answers to the following questions:

- **Where** did the alleged discrimination event occur?
- **Who** allegedly discriminated against you? Your boss? A co-worker? Someone else in the organization?
- **What** did the person do or say to you that were different from how he or she treated others?
- **Why** do you believe that a person discriminated against you? Are you able to make a clear link between his or her actions or words -- and your protected status?

Document the Problem

- **Gather documentation:** Take careful notes of key conversations and events. Note the time, date, and names of others who were present. If there are legitimate documents to which you legally have access that support your position, assemble them. These might include company policies, offer letters, performance reviews, memoranda, emails and other correspondence, and your employee handbook.
- **Talk with your coworkers:** If they witnessed any contributory events, enlist their support by asking them to document, sign, and date their observation or what they heard.

Know Your Rights and legal deadlines

- The more you know about your legal rights in the workplace, the more confident you will be in presenting your problem. Check the EEOC web site, and your state's Department of Labor web site. Find the appropriate law (Title VII, ADA, ADEA, and EPA) which has potentially been infringed.
- You may wish to explore a mediation and arbitration solution, also known as Alternative Dispute Resolution -- or ADR.
- State laws set deadlines called statutes of limitation which vary, depending upon the type of action occurred. If your employer doesn't take action within a reasonable time frame, or if you are demoted or fired, consider whether to take legal action. Consulting an attorney is an option to learn about the strength of your claim, what deadlines apply, and what remedies may be available to you.

Ask for a Meeting with your employer

- **Understand the grievance procedure/appeal process.** Obtain a written copy of the grievance/appeal process from your employer.
- **Have a Discussion With Your Employer.** This opens the opportunity to air differences. The problem may stem from an oversight, a misunderstanding, or a lack of legal knowledge. Most companies want to stay within the law and do the right thing.

- **Stick to the facts.** Before meeting with your employer, write a brief summary of what has gone wrong and your recommendation for resolving the problem. It might help to have someone more objective, such as a friend or family member, review the facts, and brainstorm with you about possible resolutions. Make sure not to leave any important facts out.
- **Remain calm.** Dealing with a workplace problem can be stressful, but unfounded accusations and emotional outbursts won't help you get your point across or make you feel better. Practice your presentation ahead of time to make sure you can remain professional -- and calm.
- **Work toward next steps.** You want to gain agreement about what will happen next. Will the company investigate the problem? Will your boss talk to your coworkers or supervisor? What will happen to performance evaluations, job responsibilities, or reporting relationships during the process?
- **Follow up.** Once you have spoken to your employer, make sure to follow up on the meeting. If your employer promised to investigate the matter or talk with other employees, check back to find out the status of those actions. After a few weeks have passed, schedule another meeting with your employer to discuss what progress has been made in resolving your problem.
- **Understand Termination.** If you are being fired from your job, ask for the reasons for your dismissal and ask that the reasons be put in writing.

Caution

If you resign your position, challenging a discrimination action is much more difficult.

Practical Illustration

Ali knocked on the door of his co-worker's office.

Sophia answered it. "Hi, Ali. What's up? Come on in. I'm on a break."

Ali said, "Sophia, I need your help with something. I think I'm being discriminated against here in the office."

Sophia remembered at their last diversity training that when an employee goes to their supervisor, the supervisor needs to keep the matter confidential. While Sophia wasn't a supervisor, she shut the door behind them to give him confidentiality.

Ali said, "Do I need to tell my supervisor? Should I go to human resources? Do I need to call a lawyer?"

Sophia said, "Well, first, let's take a look at our company's discrimination and complaint policy."

Ali asked, "Do you have a copy?"

"Yes, I asked for one after our last training."

They went over the policy, and Ali took the next step needed in the process.

*As long as the differences and diversities of mankind exist,
democracy must allow for compromise, for accommodation, and
for the recognition of differences.*

Eugene McCarthy

Chapter Eight: Dealing with Diversity Complaints as a Person

A discrimination complaint is an allegation by an employee of unfair treatment in some aspect of employment based upon the individual's race, religion, age, gender, color, national origin, disability, or status as a disabled or Vietnam era veteran or any other characteristic protected by law.

What to Do If You're Involved in a Complaint

Gather the following information:

- Your name, full address, home/work telephone number, email address
- The name, full address and phone number of the person, agency or organization you believe discriminated against you
- The details about what happened to you, including dates, times, who was involved, as well as names of possible witnesses
- Printed copies of corporate email messages, memoranda, or any discriminatory-incident witness information
- Copies of human resources or corporate policies
- Facts about when you believe your civil rights were violated, or your colleague's rights were violated

- Any other relevant information you believe will be helpful in the case.

Go to your direct supervisor and ask for a private meeting. State your complaint. Answer any questions your supervisor or manager asks. Your supervisor may complete a complaint form or take notes, ask you to review the information for accuracy, and sign the document. Ask for a copy once it is signed.

Understanding Your Role

After you give your complaint to your supervisor, he or she will refer the case to human resources. A member of the human resources department typically will investigate and analyze the incident.

Keep a log of any related events that occur after you have made the complaint. Save any written materials that relate to your case. Refrain from discussing the complaint with your co-workers -- or anyone else.

You can expect to be interviewed by an employee of your company acting as an investigator, or by an outside investigator, who will explain the interview process to you. The person whom you are accusing of discrimination will also be interviewed. After all the facts are gathered and analyzed, a decision will be made in the case.

Creating a Support System

First, take comfort in the fact that it is illegal for anyone in the organization to retaliate against you because you file a discrimination complaint.

Know that the process can take weeks or months. Try to remain calm; do not let your emotions get the best of you. Remember that you are protected by the law and have basic rights in the workplace; therefore, if you've been wronged, there is no reason to overreact, as the process should help to make things right.

Keep the lines of communication open with your supervisor. Continue your normal work arrival and performance routines. However if you feel you need some time away from work to re-center yourself, discuss this option with your supervisor. It is very important that you not resign your position, as this might have a negative effect on your case.

It is natural that what you are going through produces stress. In order to diffuse any added stress:

- Spend time with your family and friends
- Try to enjoy your hobbies
- Listen to your favorite music
- Eat well and exercise
- Perform relaxation or stress reduction exercises.
- Use self-talks to affirm to yourself that you have worth.

Practical Illustration

Yvette watched as her manager, Shen, walked past her cubicle. She got up to tell him something, and then she had a thought and turned back around.

Shen saw her and asked, “Can I help you, Yvette?”

Yvette said, “Actually, I was wondering if I could meet with you privately to talk about something later today?”

Shen opened up his calendar. “Sure, how about 4 ‘o clock today?”

Yvette agreed to this and went back to her cubicle. She had finally decided to make a formal complaint, but then she remembered that she needed to prepare first. Yvette wrote down details about what happened to her, including dates, times, who was involved, as well as names of possible witnesses. Then, she also wrote down ideas that she had for how the situation could be resolved. Yvette went to the meeting relaxed and prepared.

*We all live with the objective of being happy; our lives are all
different and yet the same.*

Anne Frank

Chapter Nine: Dealing with Diversity Complaints as a Manager

Workplace complaints regarding discrimination generally originate with employees -- or through exit interviews. They can also come through notification of an EEOC or similar agency, or by letter from an attorney.

As a manager, you are often the first point of contact when an employee wishes to make a complaint. Because efficient and effective handling of a complaint is an important responsibility, it is critical to understand and follow a careful process.

Recording the Complaint

When you are approached by an employee who wishes to make a complaint, schedule a time as soon as possible to meet in a quiet, private setting.

If a formal complaint form exists within the organization, use it to note all the details. If not, take careful handwritten notes. Listen attentively to the employee's responses based on the questions you ask during the interview.

At a minimum, ask for and document the following information:

- Date and time of the complaint
- Name of employee filing the complaint
- Home and work telephone numbers and e-mail address

- Employee' s position and supervisor
- Name of accused employee
- Accused employee's position
- The incident(s) of the complaint.

Make sure to be objective, fair, and consistent, and respond clearly and consistently to any questions the complainant asks. Thank the individual for his or her willingness to file a complaint, and assure the employee that you will maintain confidentiality. Advise the individual of the next steps in the process.

Identifying Appropriate Actions

In many companies, there is a designated diversity officer or member of the Human Resources department who is responsible for taking and investigating diversity complaints. If you work at a small company without a designated individual or a human resources department, go to your direct superior and ask with whom you should file your report.

- Provide your notes and records to this person.
- At no time discuss the complaint with anyone else, as the person who made the complaint was promised confidentiality.

Under no circumstances should you ever ignore a complaint.

Choosing a Path

In discrimination cases, it is likely that an investigation will occur. Your action path must include a high degree of professionalism and cooperation. Below are several suggestions.

- Participate fully in an investigation
- Continue to monitor the situation in your workgroup
- Report any new complaint information you receive to the diversity officer or human resources representative
- Arrange for a short paid leave for the employee, if warranted
- If the issue is a violation and your employee is being accused, you may need to temporarily reassign him or her. Obtain pertinent advice from your human resources department
- Assume business as usual. Remain calm and cordial, and business-like in your interactions with all of your team members and colleagues
- Continue to maintain an open door environment
- Be consistent; continue enforcing policies and rules consistently and fairly.

Practical Illustration

Henry sighed as he sat across from his boss, Sheila. “That’s everything. I waited for a long time to tell you about the harassment, because I was afraid I’d get into trouble.”

Sheila said, “I just want to let you know that I will be referring this complaint to the human resources department. Everything you’ve said will be kept confidential.” She then said, “I’m glad you let me know how you’ve been feeling. You did the right thing telling me.”

Henry visibly relaxed. “I’m so glad you said that, Sheila.”

Before he left, Sheila said, “I just wanted to remind you not to discuss this matter with your co-workers, to make sure that this is handled properly and professionally.”

Henry said that he would not discuss the complaint with his co-workers. Then he returned to work, relieved that he had made the complaint.

*There is nowhere you can go and only be with people who are like
you. Give it up.*

Bernice Johnson Reagon

Chapter Ten: Dealing with Diversity

Complaints as an Organization

An organization must take specific actions once a complaint has been filed. All complaints must be taken seriously and dealt with in a professional manner. As a company you should be prepared with documentation, policies, and procedure to follow if a complaint is ever made. We will look at the processes involved if ever a complaint is put forth.

Receiving a Complaint

If your organization has a formal complaint form and the complaint consists of notes, transcribe them to the complaint form to make sure the information is complete.

- Treat the person with respect and compassion
- Do not blame or retaliate against the complainer
- Follow documented policies and established procedures.

Weighing the need for an Investigation

Based on the severity of the complaint, whether there is disagreement about the incident, and how any similar complaints were handled in the past, decide whether an investigation is warranted. If the issue is simple and straightforward, or easily resolvable, a full investigation may not be warranted. But if the charge is serious -- or you sense there are other factors below the surface at play, an investigation is in order. You can identify one

or more company employees to conduct the investigation, use a licensed investigation professional, or retain an attorney to conduct the investigation.

A company investigator should have some prior experience along with the ability to remain impartial and discreet. He or she should have higher ranking, if possible, than the complainant. Certain situations merit the use of an outside investigator.

They include:

- Your organization does not have an individual qualified to conduct the investigation
- The complaint involves widespread discrimination
- The person accused of the infraction is a high-level employee
- A company practice or policy is challenged as having a negative impact on a particular group
- The complaint has been publicized in the community, on radio, TV or the internet
- The complainant has hired an attorney, filed charges with the EEOC or other state or federal agency, or filed a lawsuit.

Conduct an Investigation

You will want find out who complained, why, who is being accused of discrimination, whether any witnesses have been named, and what potential employment decision is being questioned. Follow the process below.

1. **Map out the investigation.** Ask some open-ended questions to set the stage; what do you need to find out? Who might have important information? How best to obtain it?
2. **Assemble documents and other evidence.** Collect relevant email messages, employee files, performance reviews, attendance records, the work history of the complainant and the accused, and any other documentation you feel will be helpful. Include copies of company policies.
3. **Plan and conduct interviews.** You will interview the complainant, the person or persons accused of discrimination, and any witnesses. Explain the investigation process, the fact that confidentiality will be respected, that reprisal (retaliation) is prohibited, and that there will be opportunity for questions or concerns. Take careful notes. If you plan to tape the interviews, make absolutely certain that you have received written consent forms from all involved persons. Note that a union member has a right to bring a representative to the interview if requested. When you interview an accused person or witnesses, take care not to divulge any unnecessary information.

4. **Review and evaluate the evidence.** Examine the facts and assess plausibility and credibility. Do witness reports support the complaint? Try to draw conclusions. Note: You may need a second opinion to validate their soundness. Determine whether misconduct occurred. The three most probable outcomes are that misconduct occurred, did not occur, or it cannot be determined whether misconduct occurred.

Choosing a Response

Take Action

If you find that discrimination occurred, take corrective action. You want to a) end the discrimination and b) remedy the victim's situation(s). Carefully evaluate the circumstances and consider corrective actions. The punitive actions should correspond to the level or severity of the infraction(s). And even if a solid conclusion cannot be made, preventive actions can be taken.

Either way, options include:

- Warnings to avoid the offending conduct in the future
- Training or educational programs, individually, as a group, or company-wide
- Verbal counseling or warnings
- Suspension
- A corrective action plan or probationary period
- Deferral of a performance review date
- Demotion
- Transfer of the offending employee
- Reduction in salary or salary freeze
- Termination with cause.

Document the Investigation

Keep all notes and documentation of the findings. Write a short formal report explaining the decision along with the reasons. Keep a copy in the company's confidential files; it should never go into an employee's personnel file.

Follow Up

Contact the complainant on occasion to make sure that problem has stopped, that there has been no retaliation, and that the employee feels safe and comfortable. At your discretion, you may also wish to contact the accused employee as well to make sure things have returned to normal.

Learning from the Complaint

Regardless of the outcome of the complaint, if you found ethnic, racial, gender or disability practices, now is the time to make things better. Below are some actions your organization should consider taking.

- Write or enhance your affirmative action and discrimination policies and procedures. Make them available through multiple outlets such as the employee handbook, bulletin boards, and the company intranet
- Train one or more qualified employees in your company to conduct complaint investigations.
- Add a page about the company's diversity programs to your company web site, if one doesn't exist.
- Institute new diversity training programs or new program chapters.

- Raise your management training bar so that managers and supervisors understand how to handle discrimination claims efficiently and effectively.
- Examine and modify promotion and hiring practices to make sure they are air-tight with respect to protected classes in hiring and promotion.

Practical Illustration

Johanna felt like her stomach was in knots, after making a complaint about a co-worker. She had thought about trying to resolve the situation herself, but she was too worried about retaliation from her co-worker.

Her manager, Carlos, followed all policies and procedures of the company by the book. He noticed that she was frowning and seemed distracted. “Johanna, you still look worried. Is there anything else you want to say?”

Johanna said, “Do you think there will be a full investigation? Will this be handled quickly? Or will it take a long time?”

Carlos said, “These matters can take time to resolve. However, sometimes complaints don’t need a full investigation, if they can be easily resolved. I’ll take this matter to human resources, and we’ll go from there.”

Johanna felt better, knowing that her complaint was being taken seriously and that her manager had been honest with her.

If we are to achieve a richer culture, rich in contrasting values, we must recognize the whole gamut of human potentialities, and so weave a less arbitrary social fabric, one in which each diverse human gift will find a fitting place.

Margaret Meade

Closing Thoughts

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- **Daniel Patrick Moynihan:** Everyone is entitled to their own opinion, but not their own facts.
 - **Melissa Etheridge:** I feel my heart break to see a nation ripped apart by its own greatest strength--its diversity.
 - **Lillian Hellman:** Since when do you have to agree with people to defend them from injustice?