

ACTION PLAN FOR MANAGING BIAS AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

Keeping in mind that every organization is unique, consisting of different personal brands and growth goals, consider the following as a starting point to use in developing your organizational action plan for managing bias and diversity issues.

Step 1: Identify Bias: - It's everyone's job to stay alert and pay attention to friction and differing opinions between employees...at any level in your organization. If bias or discrimination is felt or witnessed by junior employees, they often will not feel comfortable or able to speak up. Based on the culture that you want to cultivate in the organization, as a group develop a list of behaviors that are acceptable and those which are not. When you see such friction or differing opinions are escalating to the point of no longer being a productive tool to allow diverse views, you are on notice to act.

Step 2: Gatekeeper- Identify a subcommittee of ideally three employees that the person in Step 1 goes to present the issue. Ideally, this subcommittee is composed of an employee from various departments and seniority levels. Decide if the process is to be anonymous or not-- if everyone in the organization is responsible for identifying bias and discrimination, then arguably it not only the accuser/aggrieved party who is reporting the issue to the subcommittee, so how relevant is anonymity to your organization?

Step 3: Subcommittee Action- Identify what baseline tools the subcommittee uses to assess the act in question. For instance, compare the act in question to the list of behaviors that has been set up as acceptable within the firm (see Step 1) and those that are unacceptable. How long does the subcommittee have to review the issue and distill it down into key facts and issues?

Step 4: Group Collaboration/Meeting- Set up procedures to ensure the entire department (or organization if you are a smaller entity) meets to air out the issue. What day of the week will this meeting take place? Who schedules it on everyone's calendar as a "required" meeting? How long do you meet? Who runs the meeting- the Subcommittee or someone else? Devise a uniform agenda for each and every meeting, so it is fair.

Step 4 is often the step that is skipped because everyone wants to ensure secrecy or privacy. In actuality, this step is the hardest and that's why it is often overlooked. Skipping this step leads to cultural problems and stunts growth. Holding an open and safe forum for the issue to be presented in a neutral manner, ensures:

- a) True miscommunications to be addressed
- b) The aggrieved party to be heard
- c) The party who was displaying bias to be educated on how to do it differently next time
- d) Everyone learns to be more self-aware and open