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3 Strategies For Improving Inequalities In The Workplace

Introduction

Solving inequality in the workplace will take more than a diversity and inclusion strategy. Inequality in the workplace is the elephant in the room for most, if not all, companies in the United States. It's an obstacle that victimizes based on gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and religion.

And unfortunately, there's no simple solution.

For instance, when we look at racial inequalities in the workplace, "there have only ever been 15 black CEOs in the history of the Fortune 500" and according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, African Americans hold only an estimated 6.7% of the nation's 16.2 million management positions. So, when you start to examine approaches to improve racial inequalities in the workplace, you must start with three mental shifts in context.

Below, we'll discuss the three foundational mental shifts organizations must make to improve racial inequalities in the workplace.

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Shift 1

Racial Inequality Is Actually About Blackness.

Disclaimer, this is going to be awkward, but if you genuinely want to improve racial inequality at work, this first shift is a game changer.

The world—places not limited to India, Nigeria, and the Dominican Republic—including the United States are under the false impression that lighter complexions are better, more appealing.

The lighter your complexion, the more easily it is for a minority to fit in and be accepted with the white majority.

Many minorities use bleaching creams and limit time out in the sun to combat the negative social effects of having darker skin.

Consequently, to make any impact on racial inequality in the workplace, we all have to admit that this is actually an issue for people of color, but to take it a step further, it's also a conversation within a context of good people versus bad people.

For instance, in our consciousness, we all hold a belief that black people (or people with dark complexions) are less than or bad.

We hold stereotypes—learned beliefs— about people with dark complexions. Those beliefs are so negative, we call these people black.

We don't need to go into the personal perceptions people hold about themselves or each other when they identify as "white" or "black" but just think of the impact a whole group of <u>people who self-identify</u> as "good" or "white" could have based merely on a part of their identity that they neither chose or can change.

Now think about what it's like to self-identify and be identified as "black" or bad.

With this first shift, it's important to see racial inequality not as a problem in the workplace but as a breakdown in the world. And while this problem is bigger than any one organization, each corporation, small business, and team can do their part to support all people as we all struggle to transform this deep wound on the skin of humanity, create self-awareness, and develop solutions to racial inequalities in our places of work.

Shift 2

Racial Inequality At Work Is Not A Recruitment Problem.

It's More Like The Breakdown That Would Happen If You Ripped The Roots Out From Under A Tree But Still Wanted It To Stand Tall.

At the heart of the discussion on racial inequality in the workplace, is that blacks and whites see racial inequality from two drastically different perspectives.

In a 2016 Pew Research Center study, "On Views of Race and Equality," Upcounsel summarized the Pew study as follows: 43 percent of African Americans believe it is unlikely that the nation will be able to make the necessary reforms required for all to achieve equitable rights. While only 11 percent of Caucasians and

With this second shift, our white colleagues need to understand the degree to which blackness is viewed as negative in the corporate world but more importantly, we all need to understand the prevailing beliefs about whiteness and how they influence our perceptions as well as our understanding of ourselves and non-white people.

This is not something that can be solved with a better strategy. Many black and white people see the inequalities and the reasons for the inequalities differently. For any changes to happen, everyone needs to see these differences, the possibilities for change, and potential solutions from similar perspectives. Otherwise, any solution will only provide short-term solutions.

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Shift 3

Empathy Is Key To Solve Racial Inequality At Work.

Increased empathy is the final shift organizations need to make as they start on a path to solve racial inequalities in the workplace.

Empathy, the ability to understand others and share in their feelings is foundational to any racial inequality solution. Empathy matters in the workplace . As Businessolver reported in its 2018 State of the Workplace Empathy Study, "87% of CEOs see a direct link between workplace empathy and business performance."

So, once you've made shifts one and two in your understanding of race differences and racial inequalities in the workplace, shift 3: empathy is the only natural step.

From empathy, a world of possibility opens to your organization because you're no longer dealing with racial inequality from your limited perspective. If empathy is practiced within an organization, everyone begins to see the perspectives of everyone else, making diversity and inclusion consultations and decision making a team effort—not limited to a few.

Again, solving racial inequality will not be easy. Right now, no one really sees the problem the same way and no one wants to admit that their limited perspective on the problem won't fix racial inequality in the workplace—no matter how smart, how powerful, or how well-informed a person is.

Fixing racial inequality in the workplace is a team project. The three shifts discussed above will help us all start to walk and to work together toward a common solution to this global problem.

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Congrats! You're On The Right Path

Jump Recruits partners with organizations to deliver great talent, focusing on Black & Brown professionals.

Take this action one step further, reach out to our client partnerships team and talk through what resources you need to achieve the results you want.

Diversity Deep Dives
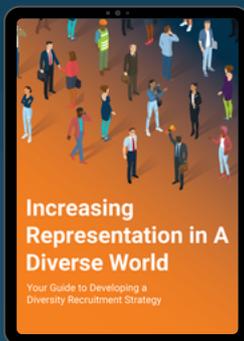
Diversity Recruitment Strategy Guide

Diversity Recruitment Action Plan

3 Strategies For Improving Inequality In The Workplace

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