

# ~~Racism.~~

In June 2020, the Dayton Chamber released a statement declaring racism a public health crisis, and we asked our member businesses to sign on and stand with us in committing to change. In September, we invited the signatories of

the statement, over 80 local businesses, to join us for a virtual roundtable with business leaders committed to combatting racial injustice and ensuring equity in their organizations. The Dayton Region's business leaders have stepped up to provide insight into the best practices in equity and inclusion that have led to change in their workplaces. What follows are best practices that have been identified to confront racism and provide equity in your place of business.

## **You cannot change what you are unwilling to confront.**

It is important to have tough conversations at every level of their organization, but particularly amongst leadership. Discomfort is inevitable, but silence is no longer an option if hope to enact real change.

## **Creating a safe space for open dialogue & learning is key.**

These spaces may take the form of leadership forums, where leaders gather with other leaders to learn from each other. Seek out opportunities to bring in outside speakers/facilitators and experts to help you with this work. Often, conversations moderated by professionals will go much more smoothly than those internally facilitated. Provide opportunities for your staff to engage- ensuring that these dialogues move beyond Human Resources and into your entire organization.

## **It is not the job of Black colleagues to educate others about race.**

Different organizations have different workforce demographics. It can create further wounding and marginalization when Black colleagues are asked repeatedly to educate white colleagues about race and racism in the workplace. Seek diverse perspectives, but don't assume that any one person can or should speak on behalf of an entire race or group of people.

**Listening sessions can be critical tool in engaging your employees and leadership.**

Offering up the opportunity for leadership to hear from your employees and vice-versa about the issues that matter most to them. Leadership must be ok with being vulnerable, authentic, and ready to truly listen.

**It's ok to make mistakes and say the wrong thing.**

The worst thing leaders can do is to ignore what is happening both inside and outside the walls of our organizations. There is no “compartmentalizing” racism and inequity, it permeates all aspects of our culture & institutions, and needs to be addressed accordingly. Leaders should start with the premise that we don't want any of our employees to feel like they have to hide a part of themselves in the workplace, then leaders can begin to build a culture that reflects that belief.

**Know the data.**

Leadership should understand the demographics of their workforce, and the makeup of their organizations. We can't change what we don't measure, so it's critical that organizations examine everything from recruitment, hiring & onboarding practices to leadership advancement & promotion with the lens of equity and inclusion.

**Equality vs Equity.**

To truly create a culture in your workplace where all employees feel included and have opportunities to reach their full potential, we must shift from an “equality” mindset, or providing everyone exactly the same resources & support, to an “equity” mindset, where support and resources are provided depending on specific needs and abilities.

**This is a journey.**

Don't be frustrated that change isn't happening more quickly. Real and meaningful change of entrenched systems & behaviors is tough. If we want to make sure that our changes are sustainable, we must be less concerned with the “optics” and more focused on rolling up our sleeves and digging into the tangible work.

**Seeking out support & resources is key.**

You don't have to figure this out alone. There are lots of resources available, both locally and nationally that pull together research & education. Pick one topic, like micro-inequities or ally-ship, and dive into that topic with your leadership team, your staff committees, etc. Be willing to work to educate yourself, and then commit to educating others. To be sustainable, combatting racial injustice and ensuring equity in the workplace must shift from being solely a job of your HR team to being an organization wide effort, invested in and driven by, your top leadership.

**2020 Equity Initiatives**

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