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TACKLING RACE IN THE WORKPLACE:
Turning Your Words into Actions

#BlackLivesMatter created a much-needed cultural movement to address systemic racism against black people in our society. There is a growing impatience from employees.They're expecting answers and, more important, actions from their organizations. How can we as employee relations leaders start and facilitate conversations? What are organizations doing?

We have created this quick guide of best practices from our webinar, **Talking About Race in the Workplace**, for HR and Employee Relations leaders. Get practical advice to start the conversation on race—and empower senior leadership, managers and employees build the right action plans for their organization.

What Can Organizations & the C-Suite Do?

Organizations must think beyond updating their mission statements or sending out a company wide email. They need to foster a "speak-up culture" where employees feel comfortable reporting an incident or issue they observe and also a "listen-up culture" where senior management assumes ownership and accountability to take action and make sure everyone's voice is heard and respected. Whatever the level within the organization, everyone needs to take a "boots on the ground" approach of we are all in this together versus putting the ownership on one Employee Relations department or person.

Tips for Organizations:

1. Own the Culture: The C-Suite sets the culture. Leadership needs to demonstrate the urgency to have conversations on race. The CEO needs to be the sponsor and lead by example.

2. Go Beyond Annual Training: Make sure anti-racism, unconscious bias and anti-discrimination training is a regular dialogue at all levels within the organization and train managers on how to have conversations about race with their teams. Companies need to allocate L&D resources beyond "unconscious bias training"—truly equipping individuals to learn how to have conversations, be an ally and understand racism. Make sure these programs translate to concrete actions individuals can take to work on their own habits and beliefs.

3. Look at Your Benefits Packages: Consider providing additional mental health benefits and a Volunteer Day to dedicate to giving back and participating in issues in their community that are important to them.

4. Examine Organizational Policies and Processes: Examine your policies for systemic racism: racism has been baked into how many of our companies operate.

5. Engage in the Community: How can your organization make a difference and influence beyond your walls? We need to rally together to amplify the message and mobilize our workforces with tools, training and opportunities for employees to get out in the community and use their voices. Think of your role in the community.

6. Evaluate Diverse Talent Pipeline & Experience: Having diverse interview panels and sources to attract diverse candidates has been an HR focus area for some time, but now is the time to make sure it is standardized across the board and actively track the progress. We need to make sure the focus isn't just about hiring diverse candidates but also developing and promoting them into leadership roles. Even if you aren't hiring during the pandemic, now is the time to look at the talent pipeline, to identify and set up diverse employees for success and promotion into leadership roles.

7. Conduct Pay Gap Audits: Are all employees being paid fairly regardless of gender and ethnicity?

8. Share Stories: Amplify black voices within the organization. If employees are ready or willing to talk about their experiences, ensure that they have a platform and active forum to be heard including active participation from management.

9. Ensure Mandatory Participation: Not everyone will be ready or comfortable speaking up but its important that they are in the room. They need to be present and open to listening. It's important that organizations do not let employees opt out.

10. Creating a Safe Space: Organizations need to recognize that everyone might not say the right thing or phrase things perfectly but we need to establish guidelines and ensure all conversations are based on respect. This is a critical part of the culture shift needed in the organization and we need to ensure that all employees have a safe space to speak up and also plan ahead for the scenarios when employees or managers do get it wrong.

What Can Managers Do?
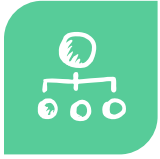
Managers really need to step up and leverage their power to lean into these difficult conversations and lead by example for their teams. Most importantly, employees need managers to be allies who will advocate for them.

Tips for Managers:

1. Take a Leading Role: Managers can't stay silent. They need to acknowledge what's happening, share their stance on racism, share their accountability plan, recognize the unequal treatments that exist and collaborate to influence change including dialogue with suppliers, customers, industry groups, etc.

2. Be an Ally: Create a safe space for conversations and check in with their employees to see how they are feeling. Create a dialogue around empathy and see what they can do to be supportive. Managers need to make themselves available as a resource versus assigning the responsibility to an Employee Resource Group.

3. Look at Team Diversity: How diverse is your team? Is there representation at all levels of the organization? Plan for the long term even if you're not actively recruiting now.

4. Sponsorship: Work with hierarchy of management to promote a diverse talent pipeline and starting a sustainable plan today so that diverse employees are supported, prepared and hired into leadership roles.

What Can Employees Do?
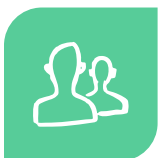
All employees regardless of their role, ethnicity or experiences need to be part of this conversation and ownership in moving the organization forward. Being an ally is not just showing up to a Black Employee Resource Group.

Tips for Employees:

1. Research & Relearn: Commit to ongoing learning and education around systemic racism through various articles, books, documentaries and other resources available, then share these resources within your communities in the workplace and beyond.

2. Listen: Listen to understand and hear the experiences of black colleagues, through company organized events, forums and 1:1 discussions.

3. Be an Advocate: Recruit more allies and bring people into the conversation who wouldn't have joined on their own. Most importantly, speak up! Don't be a bystander of behavior that perpetuates systemic racism.

4. Build an Accountability Plan: Be purposeful about your commitment to being an ally. Set ongoing goals around education, activism and steps you are going to take to be intentional as an employee and member of your community.

Wherever you are and whatever position you have, use your voice. Advocate for an end to racism and inequality. Own your power to lead—and have the uncomfortable conversations—in this moment.

To learn more, visit www.hracuity.com. Join the conversation and take action.