Guide to Creating an Equitable Work Environment

Compiled by Marquette University Employee Resource Groups

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Introduction

As we begin a new academic year, we all strive to bring our best S.E.L.F. (Service, Excellence, Leadership, and Faith) and to bring out the best in one another each day on Marquette's campus. Marquette Employee Resource Groups collaborated this summer to compile a resource document to identify and recommend skills and actions that all Marquette employees can practice in helping to promote an equitable work environment. It is our hope that in the spirit of the Marquette Mission, Vision, Guiding Values, and Statement of Human Dignity and Diversity, this document helps guide our interactions in order to better serve one another as members of the Marquette community.

Part 1: Skills to Further Develop

Empathy
  - **What is it?**
    - Engaging in empathetic interactions is the ability to "see the world as others see it," being as "non-judgmental" as we can," working to understand "another's feelings," and echoing or communicating our understanding of what the other has shared with us back to them (Wiseman, 1996, p. 1165).
    - Practicing empathy is an active process. "Understanding another's life circumstances comes through hanging out with others, faithful witnessing, listening to testimonies, leaving the comforts of the spaces that we inhabit and cherish, making mistakes, asking questions, taking risks, and feeling stupid about our mistakes and assumptions (Bailey, 2009, p. 31)."

  - **Why is it important?**
    - Relates to our mission as an institution
      - "Cura personalis" or care for the whole person is a reminder that all of our "talents, abilities, physical attributes, personalities, desires, hearts, faith, and minds are all equally worthy of care and attention" (Otto).
        - Empathy is an active process focusing on the other, not on yourself.
    - Can assist in anti-racist work
      - Binkley (2016) argues racism is a psychologically rooted barrier to empathy and as such requires white folks to commit to critical self-study and reflection.
      - "This work includes empathic listening to the voices of Black Americans, educating ourselves about the history of white supremacy in this country, and finding ways to promote change in our communities" (Lanzoni, 2020).
    - Can allow us to have a stronger lens of intersectionality
      - Intersectionality "is the idea that we are not singular people; no one is situated in just one social category" (Ray, 2017). For example, identities such as woman or Black do not exist independently from one another. Each identity informs the other, which creates an intricate meeting of oppression.
      - Think of intersectionality as a tool in our "toolkit." By utilizing the lens of intersectionality, it will encourage us to see the plurality of identities and

experiences of our team members more visibly, especially if those identities or experiences do not match the mainstream (Bailey, 2009).

Emotional Intelligence

- o **What is it?**

  Psychologists Peter Salovey and John D. Mayer, two of the leading researchers on the topic, define emotional intelligence (EI) as the ability to recognize and understand emotions in oneself and others. This ability also involves using this emotional understanding to make decisions, solve problems, and communicate with others.

- o **Why is it important?**

  Emotional intelligence is widely recognized as a valuable skill that helps improve communication, management, problem-solving, and relationships within the workplace. It is also a skill that researchers believe can be improved with training and practice (Cherry, 2020).

- o **Five categories of EI**
  - Self-awareness
  - Self-regulation
  - Social skills
  - Empathy
  - Motivation

- o **Resources**
  - Visit verywellmind to learn more on how to improve your EI skills.
  - Enroll in emotional intelligence courses through Virgin Pulse.

Effective Communication

- o **What is it?**

  Put simply, effective communication occurs when the message sent is received accurately. How effective is your communication in the workplace and why does it matter? According to Vartika Kashyap, Chief Marketing Office of ProofHub, "communication is one of the major concerns in the workplace." Some statistics noted by Kashyap include the following: 57 percent of employees do not feel that they are being given clear directions and 69 percent of managers are uncomfortable communicating with employees.

- o **Why is it important?**

  Communication is important in the workplace because it helps to avoid confusion provides purpose to the work being requested, builds rapport and creates a positive company culture, and leads to workplace accountability. Additionally, among the top ten skills valued and sought by employers, effective communication is #1! When we are talking about effective communication skills we are talking about a variety of contexts: oral communication, written communication, listening, public speaking, as well as audience and message adaptability.

- o **What does effective communication look like?**
  Communication theorists posit "7Cs" of effective communication:
  - Concrete – messages must be supported by factual information
  - Coherent – messages must be well planned, logical, and sequential
  - Clarity – purpose of the message must be clearly articulated
  - Commitment – sender of the message must be dedicated to a successful outcome
  - Consistency – messages should have consistency in tone, voice, and content
  - Completeness – messages should reach a logical conclusion
  - Courteous – messages should be positively communicated

  Effective communication skills in the workplace provide the opportunity to set clear rules and roles within the organization; encourage and model effective decision-making among employees; and allow work teams to increase morale, productivity, and cohesion.

- o **What skills are required for effective communicators?**
  - Empathy
  - Consistency
  - Mindfulness
  - Active listening
  - Delegating and prioritizing
  - Time management
  - Humility
  - Positivity
  - Assertiveness
  - Honesty

- o **Resources**
  - [Employee Development](#)
  - [The MIC – Diederich College of Communication](#)
  - [The Norman Ott Writing Center – Raynor Libraries](#)

Cultural Intelligence
- o **What is it?**
  Cultural Intelligence is the degree to which you can function effectively across a variety of cultural contexts including race and ethnicity.

- o **Why is it important?**
  - Employees who possess a high level of cultural intelligence play an important role in bridging divides and knowledge gaps in an organization: educating their peers about different cultures, transferring knowledge between otherwise disparate groups; helping to build interpersonal connections and smooth the interpersonal processes in a multicultural workforce.

  - Culturally intelligent employees also possess the potential to drive up innovation and creativity, due to their ability to integrate diverse resources and help the business make best use of the multiple perspectives that a multicultural workforce brings to the workplace (Livermore, 2010).

- o **Resources**
    - MindTools
    - How to Develop Cultural Intelligence

Conflict Management

- o **What is it?**

    With a lack of cultural experience or understanding, colleagues and supervisors with differing identities can often times find themselves saying or doing things, unintentionally or intentionally, which can lead to increased stress in the workplace resulting in decreased morale, lower productivity, and hostile work environments.

- o **Why is it important?**
    - Once an issue has arisen in the workplace, one or both sides may find themselves emotionally compromised and either unwilling or unable to trust or to elicit trust from other persons involved in the situation, requiring outside assistance and mediation to help identify the underlying source of the conflict and to help facilitate a dialogue that can lead to an effective mediation of the issues.

    - It is often helpful to bring in a neutral third party into the situation who is not directly involved in the situation, cannot be viewed as possibly having a bias toward one side or other, and who has an awareness of institutional resources and processes that can be brought to bear to help deescalate the situation and to enable the parties to find an equitable and effective solution to the situation.

- o **Campus Resources**
    - Utilize the Office of Institutional Diversity and Inclusion to facilitate discussions and to advise on best practices to deescalate conflicts and create workplace and management policies that will enable a harmonious environment.

    - Contact Wendy Butler (Human Resources - Director of Organizational Development) and Kristen Kreple, J.D. (Title IX Coordinator) for additional support.

Part 2: Workplace Support

Foster an Inclusive, Anti-racist Climate

- o **Build meaningful inclusion**
    - Be honest, empathic and transparent. When employees are connected, businesses see an increase in productivity and overall success by 22% (Baldoni, 2013).
    - Acknowledge when changes need to occur and create needed policies.
    - Devote resources to create a positive environment that allows for every member of the team to experience a sense of belonging.
        - Align your actions with Marquette University's mission, values and the Ignatian pedagogy - "Nurture an inclusive, diverse community that fosters new opportunities, partnerships, collaboration and vigorous yet respectful debate".

- Create social conscience sessions through GROW, based on various faiths, cultural differences, genders and other themes to ensure that a strong effort is made to equally allow for opportunities to learn and engage.
- Create an environment where each person is relevant and a part of the shared mission.
- Open a dialogue about gender pay inequality.

- **Antiracist environment**
  - Envisioning Higher Education as Antiracist
    - Three Tiers of Recommendations
      - Tier 1: ensuring responsibility and accountability
      - Tier 2: countering and redressing a legacy of racism
      - Tier 3: enacting an equitable antiracist society
  - Implicit Bias
    - Take Harvard's Implicit Association Test to help recognize implicit attitudes that you may not have been aware of.
    - Reference Marquette's Diversity Recruitment Toolkit
  - Strengthen Anti-Discriminatory Policies
    - In 2019, Harvard Business Review conducted a survey in which 75% of respondents observed policies were created with a language that suggested tokenization rather than actual change.
    - Be intentional about writing an effective anti-bias policy.

- **Inclusive Spaces**
  - The work of intersectionality in the workplace involves bringing to the fore those individuals and groups whose perspectives are often devalued; in male-dominated fields, for example, the experiences, talents, and leadership of the non-dominant group are often overlooked.
    - Within a cultural context of increasing divisiveness, this concept provides an important framework to create change and advance inclusive workplaces.
  - Space needs to be created where minoritized employees can voice their experiences and concerns without fear of retaliation.

- **Gender Diversity**
  - Create a culture in which the use of pronouns in introductions, email signatures, and the like is commonplace.
  - Employees must be respectfully addressed by their preferred name and pronouns.

Promote Well-Being and Mental Health

- **Prevention and Planning**
  - Have discussions on setting boundaries around work and non-workspaces and model boundary-setting by not sending office communications during non-work hours.

- Some employees may need clarity and guidance on creating work "zones" and defining clear start and end times to workdays as well as appropriate lunchtimes and breaks.
- Promote mental health literacy – reduce the stigma surrounding mental health by equating its importance to that of physical health.

- o **Support and Understanding**

  - Be aware of how racism and discrimination are unique stressors to employees of color as they pose a clear social threat to survival, and are pervasive and never-ending, leaving no time to heal.
  - Support and encourage your employees to join Employee Resource Groups. Historically, these groups provide employees with a sense of community and support and can be a great resource during these difficult times.
  - Encourage employees to take time to heal or rest.
  - Consider how workloads will be managed while co-workers are furloughed and how workloads will be managed when employees return.
  - Recognize that every employee is different and works best under different environments.
  - Develop methods to assist employees in staying focused in a non-office setting.

Acknowledge Grief in its Many Forms

According to the CDC, people experience grief of many kinds as we continue to move through a COVID-19 world and pandemic of racism. Grief is an emotion that can happen not only from loss of life, but also from a drastic change in daily life and routine. Grief support is a necessary step to encourage employees to bring their best selves to the workplace.

- o **Indicators of Grief**
  - Shock, disbelief, denial
  - Anxiety
  - Distress
  - Anger
  - Periods of sadness
  - Loss of sleep and loss of appetite

- o **Campus Support**
  - Faber Center for Ignatian Spirituality
  - Employee Assistance Program

Conclusion

The authors of this document want to remind everyone in the Marquette community that the materials presented here are by no means entirely comprehensive and that the efforts described herein should be an organic process that requires collective work by everyone and a willingness to be open and understanding. It has been designed for you to strengthen your skills in the workplace in dealing with issues regarding diversity and identity, and it will require active practice, time and self-awareness to fully embrace. We ask you all to be kind to yourself and one another as we all learn and adapt. In the Presupposition at the beginning of the Spiritual Exercises, St. Ignatius reminds us all to assume good intentions. Let us all be guided by this in our daily lives.

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