



University of Phoenix®

Professional Development



THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO CREATING YOUR OWN DEIB TRAINING PROGRAM

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THE CURRENT STATE OF DEIB IN BUSINESS

Supporting diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging (DEIB) has long been a priority for businesses, but the emphasis on DEIB has been growing across industries in recent years. Shifts in the public consciousness and new insights regarding the business benefits of diversity have led more organizations to update their approach to workplace DEIB initiatives.

According to WorldatWork, in 2021, more than 80% of U.S. employers reported that they were currently implementing DEIB initiatives. Additionally, 82% of small business owners say they are making an effort to embrace DEIB in the workplace, with 15% reporting that they began investing in DEIB during the COVID-19 pandemic.

While most business leaders acknowledge that they want to prioritize diversity, equity, inclusivity and belonging within their organizations, many are unsure of the best way to do so. Supporting DEIB is highly beneficial for businesses, but can also be very nuanced, and will often require leaders to address existing problems within their work environment.

Dissolving historic workplace norms

For businesses to move forward with modern DEIB initiatives, leaders must prioritize the elimination of historic workplace norms and stereotypes from their company culture. Public opinion of many historic norms has shifted dramatically as society has advanced, and companies need to adjust their attitudes and approaches accordingly.

Outdated workplace norms, including the promotion of unhealthy competition between employees and the segregation of work based on gender, can counteract the progress achieved by DEIB initiatives and cause employees to become alienated. To ensure the continual advancement of DEIB in business, organizational leaders and employees alike must remain diligent in combating these norms.



FUTURE DEIB OUTLOOK

With more organizations recognizing and acknowledging the true importance of diversity in the workforce, efforts to support DEIB will continue to evolve, and will likely play a significant role in the future of business. By 2026, global spending on diversity, equity, and inclusivity is projected to reach \$15.4 billion, compared to \$7.5 billion in 2020.

Along with increasing spending, many businesses are also reevaluating and updating their DEIB strategies to meet the needs of their staff and address changing societal trends. Such updates may include modifying the language in DEIB policies to cover a wider range of identities, and hiring more employees with skills and experience that can support DEIB in the workplace.

“If you go on LinkedIn, it seems like every other job posting is in HR, diversity, equity and inclusion...” said Courtney Altamiro, Senior Director of Human Resources at University of Phoenix.

This growing emphasis on DEIB is partly due to the growing understanding of its benefits for organizations. Studies have shown that networking with diverse groups of people can help business leaders foster innovation and increase the value of their firms. Additionally, a substantial majority of American employees say they want to work for companies that value diversity, equity and inclusion.

This desire for diversity, equity and inclusion is also expanding to include the B in the DEIB acronym – meaning belonging. In an EY Belonging Barometer study with 1,000 employed participants, 40% reported feeling ignored in the workplace. After all, efforts to implement DEI may ultimately be wasted if certain employees are excluded from workplace social and development opportunities. This same study, however, found that participants would feel more sense of belonging through regular check-ins – whether it be personal or professional.

The future of equity in the workplace

While efforts to support DEIB in the workplace have gained significant momentum, many organizations are still working to achieve true equity for all their employees. Although certain workplaces and individuals may use this term and equality interchangeably, there is a difference.

According to the [United Way of the National Capital Area](#), “equity recognizes each person has different circumstances and needs,” while equality “is giving everyone the same resources across the board.” Therefore, equity is based on the principle of giving opportunities and resources to those from underserved communities to level out the playing field. On the other hand, equality is based on the principle that the same opportunities should be given to everyone, no matter their background or identity.

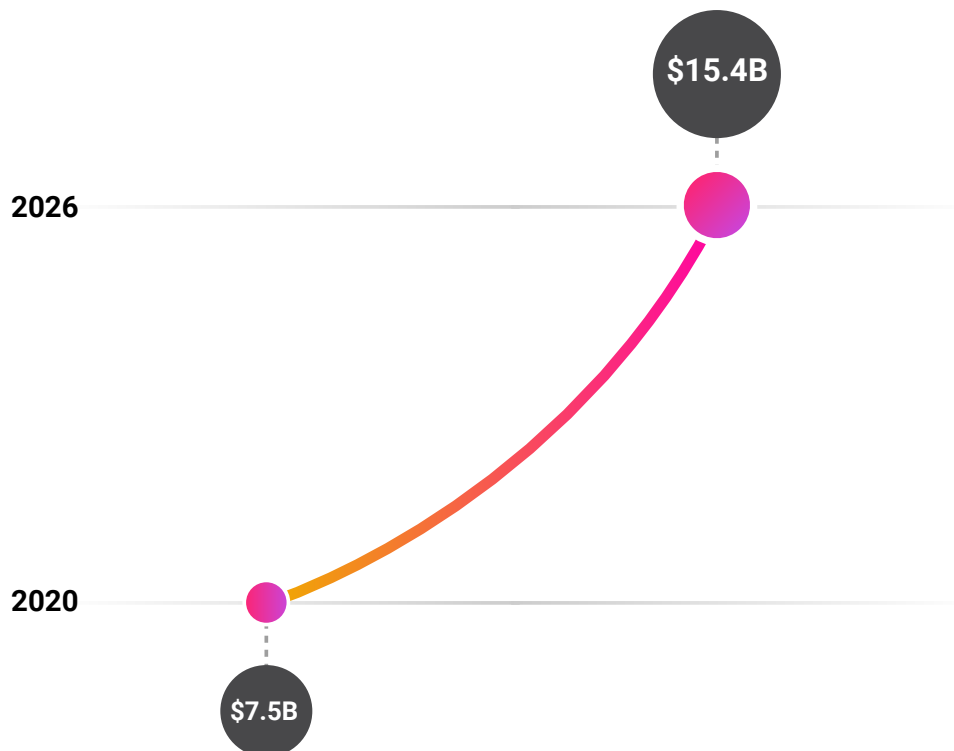
This latter principle can be flawed when recognizing that certain employees in the workplace may inherently have more privileges than others that may work towards their advantage in the workplace. Equity

is essential to giving more advantages to those who operate without these privileges to create a more balanced workforce.

80% of companies have implemented DEIB initiatives, but only 28% of employees believe their organization is fair to everyone.

To achieve true equity, every employee must be given fair and equal opportunities based on their individual needs. Even though 80% of companies have reported implementing DEIB initiatives, only about 28% of employees currently believe that their organization is fair to everyone. Organizations of all types, from small businesses to major corporations, must be receptive to employee feedback and develop thoughtful DEIB initiatives with the needs of their staff in mind.

Projected Global Spending on DEIB by 2026



PREPARING FOR A DEIB TRAINING



From looking at the statistics, it's clear that claiming to prioritize DEIB in the workplace is very different than actually doing so. It can also look different at each workplace with a variety of methods used. Training is one component of a DEIB program (albeit an important one). While it can be a highly rewarding endeavor for businesses and employees alike, developing and executing a successful DEIB initiative will require organizational leaders to conduct thorough research and take the following careful steps during preparation.

Compile and analyze pertinent data

Creating a truly optimal DEIB initiative for a workplace requires extensive knowledge of employee demographic data, including race, gender identity, religion and orientation. Many businesses may already have this data on hand, as employees sometimes provide demographic information voluntarily when they apply for jobs.

If employers don't have enough demographic data readily available, they will need to collect it themselves. This can be a delicate process, as some employees may be more reluctant than others to provide certain types of demographic information. To help accommodate everyone, managers can create and distribute voluntary anonymous surveys that allow employees to discreetly share any information they choose to.

A graphic illustrating the collection of demographic data. It features a stylized person icon on the left and a list of demographic categories on the right, each followed by a horizontal input field:

- NAME
- AGE
- RACE
- GENDER
- ETHNICITY
- PRONOUNS
- ORIENTATION
- RELIGION

Look for areas that lack diversity, equity, inclusion and/or belonging

Once collected, the data can be analyzed by employers to identify any high-priority areas that they should be focusing on with their DEIB initiatives. For example, if 90% of a company's managerial staff is comprised of white men, then they will know to prioritize expanding leadership opportunities for underrepresented groups.

Conversely, if a particular department or team is already populated with employees from a variety of different backgrounds, and all of them report high satisfaction levels, that department or team may be a lesser priority. Besides data analysis, there are several other methods that organizations can use to

determine their DEIB problem areas, including hiring outside consulting firms and soliciting feedback from employees directly.

When it comes to improving DEIB in the workplace; there's no such thing as a 'one size fits all' approach, and different organizations often have very different needs and goals. Before you start to implement a DEIB initiative, clearly identifying any areas in your organization that are especially lacking in diversity, equity, inclusion and/or belonging will help you determine the best strategy for your unique needs.

Review existing policies

Conducting a thoughtful review of your organization's current policies and best practices is a crucial part of planning any DEIB initiative. These policies play an important role in the workplace dynamic, and our understanding of their impact is constantly evolving.

Unfortunately, some company rules and policies can have unintended effects that undermine DEIB initiatives in the workplace. For example, if a company has a list of preferred colleges that they frequently recruit from, and most or all of them are predominantly

white, then the company is likely depriving candidates with diverse backgrounds of equal opportunity by adhering to that policy.

As a result, underrepresented and historically underserved populations are more likely to be underrepresented in the workplace, and management may struggle to create an inclusive atmosphere. To create an environment that supports successful DEIB initiatives, all policies should be designed to reflect an organization's ultimate DEIB goals.

Establish new DEIB objectives that align with company culture

In order to truly integrate diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging into your work environment, it's important to align the goals of your DEIB initiatives with your company culture and values. For example, if one of your core values is promoting employee development, then you may consider offering management training for minority staff as part of your DEIB initiative.

Diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging can be sensitive subjects in the workplace, and accomplishing worthwhile DEIB objectives may require you to step out of your professional comfort zone and embrace significant changes to your company's rules and culture. This will help ensure that your efforts have a lasting positive impact on employee engagement and productivity.

Some other examples of beneficial DEIB objectives for businesses include:

- Starting an ERG (employee resource group) to support equity and inclusivity in the workplace.
- Implementing a mentorship program for diverse employees.
- Altering or expanding your recruiting strategies to attract more talent from diverse backgrounds.
- Providing DEIB education to employees at all levels.
- Creating more teams made up of employees from diverse backgrounds.

Diversity training initiatives

Diversity training initiatives are critical for cultivating a socially conscious work environment and supporting organizational DEIB goals. These programs can make employees more aware of their own unconscious biases and help them understand the challenges faced by disadvantaged groups, which can enable coworkers from different backgrounds to work together more effectively.

Diversity training often covers important topics like intergenerational diversity, cultural diversity, racism, religious diversity and disability awareness. These topics are highly nuanced, and business leaders may have difficulty determining the most appropriate way to discuss them in the workplace.

“It’s challenging... it’s an incredibly important, but tricky body of knowledge and when you’re not an expert, it’s challenging to know what to do with it. So organizations then end up becoming reactive,” says Barbara Schifano, Senior Director of Learning and Development at University of Phoenix.

Despite the sensitive nature of the topics, addressing these issues directly yet tactfully is always better for organizations and employees in the long run. If you’re interested in implementing diversity training but are unsure how to do it properly, looking at examples of other diversity and inclusion training programs for guidance can provide you with direction and valuable insight.

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Barbara Schifano
Senior Director of Learning and Development University of Phoenix



Inclusion training initiatives

Along with receiving diversity training, employees should also be educated on best practices for inclusion as part of your broader DEIB program. Diversity and inclusion are both essential for creating a positive work environment. However, it's also a complex topic that requires special attention and a measured approach to properly address.

Developing an inclusion training initiative from scratch is a difficult process that requires special knowledge, and may be daunting for people without relevant background experience. In fact, many companies reach out to external consulting companies or organizations for professional development in this area. There are also a variety of professionally run training programs that can help employees and organizational leaders learn to support inclusion and understand its value in the workplace:

SHRM Inclusion Conference

Annual conference hosted by the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM). The event features a series of speakers and seminars covering important DEIB topics like inclusive hiring, cognitive diversity, unconscious bias and accessibility technology. Enrollees can design their own track based on their current knowledge and experience level; they also have the option to participate virtually or attend the events in person in Savannah, GA.

Global Inclusion Conference

Annual event developed and hosted by the advocacy group Diversity Abroad. Here, attendees can participate in hands-on training sessions, build relationships with other professionals, and engage in critical dialogues about the latest inclusion trends and best practices. The event takes place over four days and is held in Chicago.

The Forum on Workplace Inclusion

An annual conference hosted by an organization of the same name. It can be attended virtually or in person, and features events like workshops, inclusion coaching programs, immersion sessions, and "trend talks" that examine the latest topics and issues. Enrollees in this event will also get three months of on-demand access to online content and informational resources focused on inclusion.

GMF Inclusive Leadership Summit

Annual conference hosted by the German Marshall Fund of the United States. This event is focused on examining the impact of remote work on office culture, and exploring new ways to foster inclusion in remote and hybrid work environments. It includes activities like keynotes, panel discussions, case studies, and working groups where participants can learn and engage with each other.

University of Phoenix Inclusive Leadership Summit and Career Fair

An annual three-day conference focused on developing inclusive leadership skills and creating workplace cultures that prioritize employee well-being. This event is an important component of [University of Phoenix's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Efforts](#). Attendants can engage with scholars and leaders from multiple industries to examine topics such as trauma, accessibility, and the social or systemic issues that impact employees in the workplace. This event is virtual and free to attend, enabling anyone with an internet connection to participate. [In 2022, University of Phoenix welcomed 1,415 participants from 22 countries and 35 employers to the event.](#)

National Conference on Race and Ethnicity in Higher Education

The National Conference on Race and Ethnicity in Higher Education (NCORE) is an annual forum held by the Southwest Center for Human Relations Studies (SWCHRS), and [planned by leaders from select educational institutions that have been appointed to the ENCORE National Advisory Council](#). The conference features a variety of keynote speakers and interactive events focused on topics related to race and ethnicity in higher education.

This list is not exhaustive, and there is a constantly expanding range of inclusion-focused training programs for professionals to choose from. In addition to providing valuable education and experience to those who participate, these conferences can also serve as helpful examples for organizations to design their own DEIB employee training programs.

DESIGNING YOUR OWN EMPLOYEE DEIB TRAINING



Once you've assessed the current state of DEIB in your organization and identified the areas that require the most attention, you can begin the task of constructing your own DEIB training initiative or outsourcing with a consultancy firm. The first step of this process is to identify which programs you'd like to include. Fortunately, there are a variety of different programs that organizations can consider for their DEIB training.

Creating your own DEIB program

Although many consultancy DEIB programs or online training courses will have a list of courses to complete, you can also create your own program by picking courses that suit your workplace the best or adding more to any pre-existing program.

There are plenty of other training courses you can include online that you can combine to give your employees a holistic perspective on DEIB. However, you shouldn't stop at these courses, either.

Sample DEIB Programs:

What Does It Mean to Identify As Transgender or Gender Non-Conforming?

Offered by the University of Minnesota, this course will provide participants with fundamental background information about the concept of gender identity, teach them about the unique challenges faced by people who are transgender and gender non-conforming (TGNC), and help them learn to create inclusive environments in their personal and professional lives.

Culture-Driven Team Building Specialization

Offered by the University of Pennsylvania, this course addresses how employees can more effectively build, lead and participate in diverse teams. Focus areas include team dynamics, intercultural communication, cultural learning and conflict management.

Outsourcing DEIB and online training programs

Today, a significant number of all DEIB training programs are available online. As mentioned, there are also non-profit and private consultancy firms alike that specialize in creating DEIB for any workplace. Unlike in-person training, online professional development courses allow employees to make progress on their own schedules from the comfort of their homes.

In addition to the programs discussed here, there are many other diversity training courses that are fully virtual or offer online versions, and it's important to choose one that fits your needs. By implementing the right online program, you can help make DEIB training more convenient and accessible for your employees, and more affordable for your organization.

There are several different DEIB training programs and courses that can be completed entirely online:

Diversity and Inclusion in the Workplace

Offered by ESSEC business school and available online through Coursera, this course examines why it's important to be capable of seeing and hearing differences without being discriminating, and teaches employees how to manage this delicate balance in the workplace.

Gender and Sexuality: Diversity and Inclusion in the Workplace

This course, offered by the University of Pittsburgh, explores a variety of different topics related to sex and gender in the workplace. Enrollees will learn important background information about the concepts of sex, gender and sexuality, and analyze how identity influences workplace experiences and cultures.

Grovo Diversity & Inclusion Microlearning Program

Online learning platform Grovo offers a variety of different diversity and inclusion micro-courses that focus on different areas of DEIB in the workplace. These courses take only a few minutes to complete and can be previewed for free online. They cover topics like unconscious bias in leadership, the benefits of diverse groups and best practices for confronting discrimination.



WHAT TO INCLUDE IN YOUR DEIB TRAINING CURRICULUM

DEIB training should be more than just a one-and-done training that takes a day for employees to go through. Just like taking a CPR course, not only is it important for employees to go through a multiple-day DEIB program that includes a variety of important modules, but it should also be taught on a reoccurring basis. Essentially, it's important to remind employees about the importance of DEIB, and all of its intricacies, so that it becomes instinctive in their minds.

That being said, let's take a look at the different modules or individual training sessions that should be included in a DEIB training program.

Addressing unconscious bias

Also known as implicit bias, unconscious bias is present in many work environments, and can have a profoundly negative impact on DEIB initiatives. Unconscious biases are social stereotypes about certain groups that individuals form outside of their own conscious awareness.

Because they are so ingrained in our minds, yet hidden from view, unconscious biases can be difficult to remove from the workplace. Employees must be made aware of their own implicit biases and taught to adjust their patterns of thinking to remove these biases from their decision-making processes. Providing employees with this training can help leaders combat and prevent institutionalized discrimination within their organizations.

Training employees to recognize and address unconscious bias is critical for sustaining a fair and equitable workplace. Some of the most common signs of unconscious biases prevailing in a workplace include:

- Employees from the same demographic or age group are frequently chosen to lead projects.
- Management regularly uses language that's geared toward a specific demographic group (men, straight people).
- Hiring panels frequently choose white, male or straight candidates over diverse candidates with the same or similar qualifications.

What are microaggressions and how do they play a role in inclusion?

According to Derald Wing Sue, who came up with the concept, microaggressions are defined as everyday subtle interactions or behaviors that communicate some sort of bias toward historically marginalized groups. Microaggressions can be deliberate, but they often occur accidentally as a result of employees' unconscious biases.

Even when they're unintentional, microaggressions can adversely impact DEIB initiatives by alienating employees from marginalized groups and damaging the overall morale in a workplace. Training employees to recognize when microaggressions occur and educating them about their impact will help you foster an inclusive atmosphere where all employees can feel comfortable and understood.

What is cultural sensitivity and why is it important?

According to the American Psychological Association, cultural sensitivity is defined as the "awareness and appreciation of the values, norms, and beliefs characteristic of a cultural, ethnic, racial, or another group that is not one's own, accompanied by a willingness to adapt one's behavior accordingly." Prioritizing cultural sensitivity in your DEIB initiative is essential for cultivating an empathetic and understanding work environment.

Oftentimes, employees will appropriate their coworkers' cultures accidentally as a result of ignorance. Teaching cultural sensitivity in the workplace can help you prevent uncomfortable situations like these from occurring. This training can help employees identify when a statement or action is an example of cultural appropriation, and learn how to adjust their behavior patterns to be more respectful of their coworkers.

Gender wage gap

The gender wage gap is the average difference in compensation between men and women. It is a long-standing injustice that's been fueled by catalysts such as institutional discrimination and occupational segregation. Despite increasing societal awareness of the problem, this troubling disparity is still very prominent today. According to the U.S. Department of Labor, women were paid 83 cents for every dollar paid to men in 2020.

This presence of a gender wage gap in the workplace can cause employees to feel undervalued and discriminated against, making it impossible to create an inclusive, equitable environment. Educating employees about the consequences of the wage gap, and pledging to address any gender-based pay disparities within your own organization, can help you ensure that your DEIB initiative has a lasting impact.

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Creating an accessible workplace

Supporting accessibility for all employees is a crucial part of maintaining a fair and inclusive workplace. While there are some legal requirements for accessibility that all employers must comply with, such as the protections laid out in the [Americans with Disabilities Act \(ADA\)](#), organizations can often benefit themselves and their employees by going beyond the minimum legal requirements.

For example, while the ADA mandates that all facilities have at least one entrance that is accessible for all employees, either by ramp or lift, you can support DEIB further by installing two or more entrances, and ensuring that they are located close to accessible parking. While not absolutely necessary for compliance, extra measures like these can help employees with accessibility needs feel valued and cared for in the workplace.

Invisible disabilities

According to the Invisible Disabilities Association, an [invisible disability](#) is defined as a “physical, mental, or neurological condition that is not visible from the outside, yet can limit or challenge a person’s movements, senses, or activities.” While invisible disabilities are not always obvious to passersby, these conditions often have significant impacts on people’s lives, and many invisible disabilities are recognized and protected under the ADA.

Because their symptoms are not always apparent, people with invisible disabilities often deal with misunderstandings or discrimination in the workplace. Educating employees about the impacts of invisible disabilities and the best practices for accommodating employees with these conditions will help you establish a culture of support and inclusion for individuals with all types of differing needs.

Some common examples of invisible disabilities include:

- Autism
- Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)
- Epilepsy
- Cognitive or learning disabilities such as dyslexia
- Diabetes
- Mental illnesses such as bipolar disorder and borderline personality disorder

Pronouns and gender identity

Addressing gender identity is another key step toward building a diverse and inclusive work environment. Gender identity is a major part of many people’s sense of self, and employees can sometimes misgender their coworkers by not using their preferred pronouns (he, she, they). Even if they’re not intentional, actions like these can alienate employees and cause them to feel anxious in the workplace.

Teaching employees to respect and acknowledge each other’s gender identities, and explaining how to handle it when and if they accidentally misgender a coworker, can help you ensure that all employees interact with each other appropriately and make your organization a more desirable place for people with diverse backgrounds.

Sexual harassment in the workplace

Unfortunately, sexual harassment is an all-too-frequent occurrence in the workplace that has been normalized in the past. Between 2018 and 2021 alone, the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) filed 27,291 cases of sexual harassment. Of course, this only accounts for cases of sexual harassment that were reported. Unfortunately, many workplaces will discourage sexual harassment victims from reporting, or they may handle it internally to avoid a loss of reputation.

To prevent this occurrence from taking place altogether and promote respect, all employees must know what sexual harassment is and understand clearly that sexual harassment prevention is a top priority for you and your organization.

To help achieve this goal, ensure that all employees receive up-to-date sexual harassment training as part of your DEIB initiative, and establish clear and straightforward procedures for employees to report instances of sexual harassment. When and if complaints are filed, they must be taken seriously, as this will help further reinforce your commitment to protecting your employees.

27,291
cases of sexual harassment were reported to the EEOC between 2018 and 2021

Intersectionality and identity

When creating DEIB training, it's important to address all identities that could be affected by harassment or marginalization — which intersectionality can help with. Intersectionality is a feminist theory developed by Kimberlé Crenshaw as a way to properly address systematic issues affecting those with intersecting identities that may be neglected, unaccounted for or even mistreated by institutions of power.

For example, if your workplace is undergoing a DEIB hiring initiative, and the hiring team is only considering Black male candidates and white women candidates, intersectionality can help by shining a light on Black women or other unrepresented or underserved populations. Even though intersectionality was created to account for Black women, it can be applied to almost any aspect of identity, including:

- Gender identity
- Sexual orientation
- Disability
- Racial identity
- Socioeconomic status

When you're creating a DEIB program, it's important to educate your employees and yourself about how someone with intersecting identities — for example, a Black woman or a trans person with a disability — would be uniquely marginalized in the workplace due to their intersecting identities.

You should also be open to the fact that your workplace may unknowingly perpetuate acts of marginalization to future employees. As such, you must be open to feedback company-wide. By addressing these issues and putting in accommodations yourself, you're intentionally creating space for intersectional work to take place.



WHEN TO TAKE ACTION IN THE WORKPLACE

In some cases, you may be concerned about possible discrimination in the workplace, but unsure about what to do, or if what you saw warrants any action. These situations are often difficult to navigate, as the wrong type of reaction may have lasting consequences for your career and personal life. When facing questions like these, it's important to understand the limits of your capacity to intervene as a professional.

Oftentimes, dealing with certain types of discrimination or injustice may require expert intervention. In these cases, trying to handle the situation yourself can potentially do more harm than good. While you may be tempted to assist your employees in any way possible, setting and adhering to clear work-life boundaries can help you avoid overextending yourself and drifting outside of your professional wheelhouse.

Reporting and addressing discrimination

Even when employees are confident that discrimination is taking place at work, some may still refrain from speaking up in the office due to apprehension about backlash from management. To avoid this, employees can [file charges of employment discrimination](#) online via the [U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission's public portal](#), or do so in person by scheduling an appointment at their local EEOC office.

DEIB IS A PACKAGE DEAL — YOU CAN'T INITIATE ONE WITH- OUT CONSIDERING THE OTHERS

While diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging are crucial in any workplace, they are often dependent on each other, and you'll need to thoroughly address all four to develop a truly positive and supportive environment for all of your employees. For example, you can't achieve diversity without fostering inclusion and belonging. Further, you can't maintain true diversity without providing equal opportunity to employees of all backgrounds and regulating a sense of belonging within your workforce.

Organizations in every industry are implementing comprehensive programs that address all areas. Demonstrating a similar level of dedication can help your business stay on pace with competitors, build a positive reputation for your brand and ensure your employees feel valued and safe at work.

