

PRIORITIZING DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION IN TIMES OF CRISIS

Leadership Practices That Put People First



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COVID-19 is a DEI Issue

Among the fast-paced changes required of organizations in the face of a global pandemic, we must resist the temptation to problem-solve while suspending efforts for diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). Now is the time to stay dedicated to leading practices and approaches that put people first. We know this can feel overwhelming, so we developed a summary of three key areas for organizations to manage when responding to the crisis: Understand and Combat Discrimination, Identify and Mitigate Inequities, and Inclusive and Accessible Working Considerations.



Understand and Combat Discrimination

RACISM

Global paranoia, fear, and uncertainty can trigger a collective bias and result in increased incidents of racism and discrimination. Prejudice towards Asian communities is high and harmful.

ABLEISM & AGEISM

Saying “only old and sick people need to worry” can further marginalize those who are most vulnerable. Additionally, complaining about limited mobility and social isolation is a show of privilege.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

For some, being confined within the home can be dangerous and/or harmful. Domestic violence disproportionately impacts women, trans folks, people of advanced age, and people with disabilities.

What can you do?

Speak out: Be vigilant about calling in harmful and biased narratives regarding coronavirus.

Show support: Try buying from Asian-owned businesses or supporting them on social media platforms.

Mind your language: Try “people of advanced age” or “people with disabilities” instead of “old people” or “disabled people.”

Share resources: Share materials and tools with your employees and customers to help them educate and advocate.

Check-in: Keep lines of communication open. Try calling Victim Services High-Risk Support at 416-808-7066 or visiting [The Dandelion Initiative](#).

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Identify and Mitigate Inequities

IMPACTED LIVELIHOODS

If you are a business who has closed or asked employees to work remotely, it is important to consider more people who are affected and need support. Members of your contingent workforce (such as custodial staff, kitchen staff, catering companies, etc.) are left without work and income, which can exacerbate existing economic and/or health challenges.

INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES

While the response to COVID-19 encourages people to be vigilant about washing their hands, there is a lack of acknowledgement that this very act is a privilege. For many Indigenous communities, clean water is inaccessible and de-prioritized.

What can you do?

Reorganize budgets: Find ways to retain employees and level out the gaps for people in your workforce who are impacted financially.

Be a leader: Consider re-allocating pay from highest-paid executives to lowest-paid employees.

Pay anyway: If you have to cancel speakers for events, consider paying them a cancellation fee.

Advocate: Write to members of parliament to make sure Indigenous communities are not left out of the efforts.

Watch

Prefer to listen and learn?
Check out our [YouTube video](#).

Read

Find more details and examples in our blog post "[Prioritizing DEI in Times of Crisis](#)."

In the news...

United Airlines CEO Oscar Munoz and President Scott Kirby both said that they will [forsake their salaries](#) through the end of June due to a decrease in revenue.

Shopify is giving its employees \$1000 to furnish their [work-from-home](#) setups.



Inclusive and Accessible Working Considerations

FRONT-LINE EMPLOYEES

Not all jobs lend themselves to remote work, such as grocery store clerks or health care workers. In times of crisis, front line workers are needed more than ever, and expose themselves to illness, stress, burn-out, and much more.

REMOTE WORK

Organizations must consider the varied and unique needs of employees and determine how to ensure that remote working processes are both accessible and inclusive. Try [Google Meet](#), which provides live captions, screen readers and magnifiers, keyboard shortcuts, and other accessibility features. Additionally, when asking employees to move to remote work, it is important to adjust our expectations of productivity and efficiency during this difficult time.

CAREGIVING

For many employees with caregiving roles, their responsibilities are likely increased with more time at home. Women often carry more unpaid housework and caregiving responsibilities. As women absorb more of these unpaid care responsibilities, they may have to sacrifice their incomes, exacerbating pay-gaps and gendered poverty dynamics.

What can you do?

Shift priorities: Slash holiday budgets and perks, such as alcohol at parties.

Pay for transit: Cover taxi costs so employees don't have to expose themselves on public transportation.

Share some meals: Try providing meals on-site or to take home to help manage stress and precariousness around food.

Provide mental healthcare: Try providing access to mental health practitioners on-site or virtually. Check out the [Well-Being Playbook](#).

Check-in: Continually ask your employees for what they need and be open to feedback.

Test/share resources: Make sure employees are supported to work from home. Consider paying for their Internet and ensure tools are accessible.

Encourage virtual socializing: Prevent loneliness with virtual hangouts such as lunch breaks or "water cooler" chats.

Manage expectations: Expect and accommodate shifts in schedules due to caregiving and other needs.

Normalize caregiving: Family, friends, pets, and more will show up and inevitably interrupt team calls and that's okay.