



# Building an Inclusive Workforce

9.29.20

## **Thank you to our panelists!**

[Justice Gennari](#), President and CEO, Tampa Bay LGBT Chamber

Tampa Bay LGBT Chamber is currently revamping their website but Justice invites you to reach out to him to learn more about the ways that the Chamber can support you and your business at [Justice@TampaBayLGBTChamber.org](mailto:Justice@TampaBayLGBTChamber.org)

[Lauren Reyes](#), VP Operations, Tampa Metropolitan YMCA, Faculty Trainer for YMCA Diversity, Inclusion and Global Courses

## **What is inclusion?**

- Creating an environment where everyone feels welcome no matter your background, color, orientation, embracing all difference and giving everyone a seat at the table
- Demonstrate by asking someone their preferred pronouns (she/her; his/him; them/they)

## **What is an unconscious bias?**

- Everyone has a bias! The key is to recognize it, acknowledge it and work past it.
- It might be something related to your past that becomes reflected in your behavior
- Could impact someone else's goals or mission, preventing them from succeeding, excelling being included
- Your cultural upbringing will frame your expectations of how someone acts/responds/engages with you. Ex. Greeting someone by shaking hands v. a welcome kiss on both cheeks v. bowing; Holiday greetings: always saying "Merry Christmas" or "Happy Holidays"

## What can you do to break bias and be truly inclusive?

- Surround yourself by people who can help to hold you accountable
- Explore why you might have it in the first place and be open to confronting it.
- Put yourself in someone else's position when you consider how they may have had an uncomfortable response to something you've said or done.
- To create an inclusive workplace start with your actions and your words:
  - Don't START with "forced fun" but do mandate the conversation and offer opportunities to experience varying cultures.
  - Invite someone new to join you for your regular lunch/coffee break.
  - Take time to understand the different cultural experiences of those around you to explain why you and another person might not be communicating clearly or connecting effectively.
  - Casual terms, like "you guys" can be offensive or hurtful to some, and not everyone would be willing to voice discomfort. If you have a tendency to use pronoun driven terms, acknowledge it and ask others to hold you accountable.
- As a company leader:
  - Do the work to ensure that people from diverse backgrounds feel welcome *before* you seek to hire diverse team members. If you already have a diverse workforce, ensure that you are maintaining an inclusive environment.
  - When seeking to hire, make sure you're posting in places that engage and foster diverse candidates. Some examples include Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), community colleges, technical skills group, community organizations.
  - Review your website and ensure that the photos represent diversity, you have an inclusivity statement, your social media reflects your goals and values.
  - Create "ERGs" - Employee Resource Groups, employee led groups that fosters camaraderie among specific groups to make sure they feel included.
  - Develop future leaders and increase employee engagement.
  - Make sure you know how your employees are speaking about their experiences at your company.
  - Participate in community activities and organizations that support diverse and inclusive communities and goals.
  - Make inclusivity and diversity a priority even when it isn't "trendy."

- Consider if your physical building is welcoming and accessible to those with physical limitations.
- Start each meeting with a chance to reflect on how you've lived your values in the previous week.
- If you need assistance with any of the above, seek help from professionals. An outside viewpoint can be very helpful in reviewing your policies to ensure that your intent is adequately represented.
- To be inclusive you must be diverse; to be diverse everyone must have an equal place at "the table"

### **Create Brave Spaces**

- Different and a step further than just creating a "safe space" - giving someone the freedom to admit that they want to learn to make an impact, ask questions, admit shortcomings and ask for help.
- Brave spaces allow for true growth for those who seek to be truly inclusive.
- Ask for permission - when seeking the opinion of another, ask for permission to "ask questions" and seek advice. "Spokesperson fatigue" is real. Recognize that an individual in a particular demographic group does not represent his/her entire group! Be mindful and sensitive before you go to that person and ask them for insight on social issues.
- Be mindful of the other person's intentions - an awkwardly worded question can be a person's attempt to be honest and vulnerable, not hurtful or disrespectful.
- Relationships must be built on trust over time to have an honest and open conversation.

### **Tips to facilitate a conversation about inclusion effectively**

- Vulnerability and empathy should guide your conversations.
- Bring in professionals to navigate the conversation or just even an outsider to your company to bring a different perspective without bias.
- When someone says something uncomfortable or inappropriate - it's ok to let someone know honestly in the moment before taking it to HR. Give them the chance to learn in the moment the consequences of their words or actions.

## **“ERGs” - Employee Resource Groups**

- ERGs can help to provide honest insight into how inclusive they truly feel a company is.
- Size of the company doesn't matter. There's no “right” time to start an ERG.
- Best to put them in place *before* they're needed to help employees and teams navigate challenging social issues.
- An important and no cost way to add value to your company right now.

## **Resources**

- [Tampa Bay LGBT Chamber](#) - Offers Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion (DEI) Training, Guidance on how to start an Employee Resource Group (ERG), Business Development Training & More!
- [Human Rights Campaign Corporate Equality Index 2020](#)
- [The Look](#) — a talk about bias in America
- [One Journey: Racial Equity, Diversity & Inclusion](#) — W.K. Kellogg Foundation
- [Book list for Anti-Racism](#)
- [General Inclusion book list](#)
- [YMCA of the North Free Virtual Trainings](#)
- [YMCA of the North Equity Innovation Center of Excellence](#)

## **Best/Worst Advice**

- Best:
  - When a leader/manager is vulnerable and honest about their shortcomings or mistakes, their employees feel safe to do the same.
  - Don't just treat others the way you want to be treated; treat them better.
- Worst:
  - Telling someone that having an uncomfortable conversation makes others uncomfortable and therefore those conversations shouldn't happen - the opposite is true!
  - Being told to censor who you are in order to make others more comfortable.