HR Insights

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8 Tips for Creating an Inclusive Culture to Attract and Retain Employees

Employers struggling to attract and retain workers may be overlooking a leading driver of turnover: inclusion. In fact, nearly 40% of American employees would switch jobs to be part of a more inclusive workplace culture, according to a survey by QuestionPro Workforce and EQ Community.

Many employers who cultivate inclusive spaces notice positive impacts on employee morale, productivity and their companies' bottom lines. Specifically, inclusion can be a valuable component of employee retention, as employees who feel included and appreciated are generally more likely to stay at an organization. Conversely, an inclusive work environment can be highly attractive to workers in a competitive labor market. People want to work for a company where they feel accepted and can be their true selves.

This article defines inclusion and provides tips for creating an inclusive workplace culture to help attract and retain employees.

Inclusion Defined

Inclusion refers to a cultural and environmental feeling of belonging. It can also be defined as how welcome, comfortable and valued an employee feels within their workplace. Inclusion is a two-way street that's achieved when employees are accepting of their colleagues and, in turn, feel appreciated by these peers.

If employees don't feel empowered to be themselves and present new ideas, their unique skills and knowledge may not be utilized to their full potential. In an inclusive work environment, every team member can feel confident expressing their ideas.

How to Create an Inclusive Culture

While an effective company culture often hinges on the behaviors of organizational leaders, here are some additional steps employers can take to foster more inclusive spaces:

1. **Review workplace policies.** Employers should evaluate organizational policies to ensure they effectively outline inclusive employee behaviors and expectations, as well as adopt programs that promote welcoming and harassment-free spaces. Employers can also utilize these policies to highlight their company values and provide examples of how employees can live up to them.

2. **Expand employee benefits.** Employers should review their benefits offerings and perks to ensure they are inclusive. Examples of inclusive benefits include mental health benefits, paid parental leave, fertility and adoption benefits, and flexible scheduling.

3. **Build an inclusive onboarding experience.** The onboarding process plays a critical role in making employees feel seen and included. An effective onboarding experience can help employees feel welcomed from their first day on the job. As such, employers should continually review their onboarding

processes by asking new hires for feedback and making sure employees feel valued. Since the onboarding process sets the tone for a person's tenure at an organization, a commitment to inclusion can strengthen workforce attraction and retention efforts.

4. **Check in with employees.** Regular one-on-one meetings can help employees feel a greater sense of belonging when their managers, supervisors and co-workers check in on them both personally and professionally. Yet, employers should remember to be sensitive with any information obtained during these meetings and only publicly mention what others are comfortable being shared. Doing so can help build honesty, trust and respect.

5. **Ask for input.** It's essential for employers and company leaders to continually ask employees what they can do to promote inclusion and make workers feel accepted. This can be accomplished by establishing an ongoing dialogue.

6. **Give employees a voice.** Employers and managers should make it a priority to encourage employees to speak up and share their thoughts, thus promoting more inclusive spaces. For example, if someone has the floor during a meeting but is interrupted, managers can step in to moderate and let the original speaker continue. Alternatively, if an employee rarely speaks up, managers can check in with this individual privately to ask how they can be better included in team conversations.

7. **Create a psychologically safe space.** Being psychologically safe means employees feel secure in taking risks and being vulnerable in front of others. Employers can help create these spaces by supporting environments where employees are comfortable and managers know how to intervene if they see others being disrespectful.

8. **Consider employee resource groups (ERGs).** Many employers have found success with ERGs, which are voluntary, employee-led groups aimed at fostering more inclusive workplaces. They're usually targeted toward employees who share certain characteristics (e.g., gender, military experience, ethnicity, religion or other interests), but all employees are generally welcome to participate in such groups. Employers can support ERGs by developing policies and frameworks to ensure members have all necessary group resources.

Every aspect of the workplace has the potential to impact inclusion. The overall goal is for organizations to create spaces where everyone feels welcome and accepted, therefore motivating employees to show up to work engaged and be their most authentic selves.

Summary

Employees who do not feel that their workplace is accommodating—or do not feel included and welcome—are less likely to be loyal toward their employer. Furthermore, employees who feel that way may quickly leave an organization and find a new employer. An inclusive company culture can help employers retain more employees and cultivate work environments that appeal to today's workforce, thus attracting additional talent.

Contact ToughComp for more information about workplace inclusion initiatives.