The Best Online Resources To Build An Age-Inclusive Workplace

Want to know how employees feel about age and ageism? Just ask them.

Think you've got a handle on age bias and stereotyping in the workplace? The best way to understand how ageism may be getting in the way of an inclusive workplace is to survey employees about their perceptions of age and aging. Providing you have an age-balanced workforce, the answers will likely inform your next steps to building an age-inclusive workplace.

The good news is there are lots of free online resources for diversity and inclusion practitioners to utilize for employee education. Check out this article *8 Signs of Ageism in the Workplace and What to Do About Them* to see if your company shows vulnerability. If any of these signs exist, there is work to do.

Here are three short videos to get you started.

In the first video, a social experiment shines a spotlight on the barriers and ageist assumptions that older workers face in the job search. Says one over 40 customer, "I'm always judged more for my age than my resume." Suggested discussion questions:

- As a viewer, you know this is a social experiment and not real in this context. What are some of the reasons you think it felt real to those who participated?
- In what other ways might this experience hit close to home for those under/over 40?
- How do social experiments like this impact the people participating?
- What is your biggest takeaway from viewing the experiment?

In the second video, watch what happens when Gen Zs and Millennials release their outdated beliefs and embrace the idea that aging is not about decline–it's about growth. Suggested discussion questions:

- What reasons might attribute to the perception gap of younger viewers before versus after the experiment?
- How else might younger/older conversations change the way one views the other?
- What might a similar experiment look like in the workplace? (i.e., mutual mentoring)
- How can an organization measure implicit bias?

- In what ways might ageist stereotypes and bias add to your organizational costs?

In the final video, see how this common phrase often thought of as complimentary is actually demeaning to the aging population. At just over three minutes, it's an incredible conversation starter. Suggested discussion questions:

- What other common phrases might be offensive? (think at both ends of the age spectrum)

- Why do you think this video focused exclusively on women?

- What is the easiest way to compliment without bias or stereotype?

- What will it take to eliminate ageist language from everyday usage?

Research Rocks

Quality research is one of the most powerful tools diversity and inclusion practitioners rely on to influence decision makers. Using research makes a solid business case for how multigenerational teams add more value to a company's bottom line.

This Society for Human Resources Management article cites studies indicating the absence of any connection between age and loss of innovation or overall job performance. In fact teams with a wider age range outperform, according to a study by Eric Larson, founder of Cloverpop, the enterprise platform for communicating, tracking and improving decisions. Multigenerational teams with a "wide" age range of 25 years or more from youngest to oldest team member met or exceeded expectations 73 percent of the time, while those with a "narrow" range of less than ten years did so only 35 percent of the time.

One of the best all-around resources at your fingertips is Old School, a clearinghouse of free and carefully vetted resources to educate people about ageism and provide tools to dismantle it. The concept for Old School came from pro-aging activist Ashton Applewhite, author of *This Chair Rocks*, who collaborated with others to provide a one-stop-shop for blogs, books, articles, videos, speakers and other tools to help eliminate blatant ageism.

Eliminating ageism is no less important than eliminating racism, sexism or homophobia. To do so requires the same commitment to raising awareness and providing company-wide training. With these free online resources, you're off to a great start.

Follow me on Twitter or LinkedIn. Check out my website or some of my other work here.

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I write about age-related topics in the workplace.
I'm the executive director of the Age Equity Alliance, an organization partnering with organizations, companies and communities to create age equity in the workplace.
I'm also a longtime diversity and inclusion practitioner, having spent over a decade managing D&I for a global pharmaceutical company.
My passion is creating and delivering relevant, informative content that leaves people ready to take inspired action. I also have a passion for chocolate lactose-free ice-cream. And Argentine Tango.

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