



Building a Positive Working Culture On-Site

Best Practice Guide



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Workplace culture plays a pivotal role in shaping employee satisfaction and determining organizational success. In an industry like construction, where teamwork, safety, and efficiency take centre stage, cultivating a positive and collaborative working culture on sites becomes not just beneficial but essential. This resource is dedicated to offering guidance on creating a positive workplace culture where teamwork

thrives, safety is prioritized, and efficiency is optimized.

Fostering a positive workplace culture is not just crucial for the mental health and overall safety of employees on your site; it is a legal obligation you must fulfill. Following this guide will indicate compliance and due diligence.

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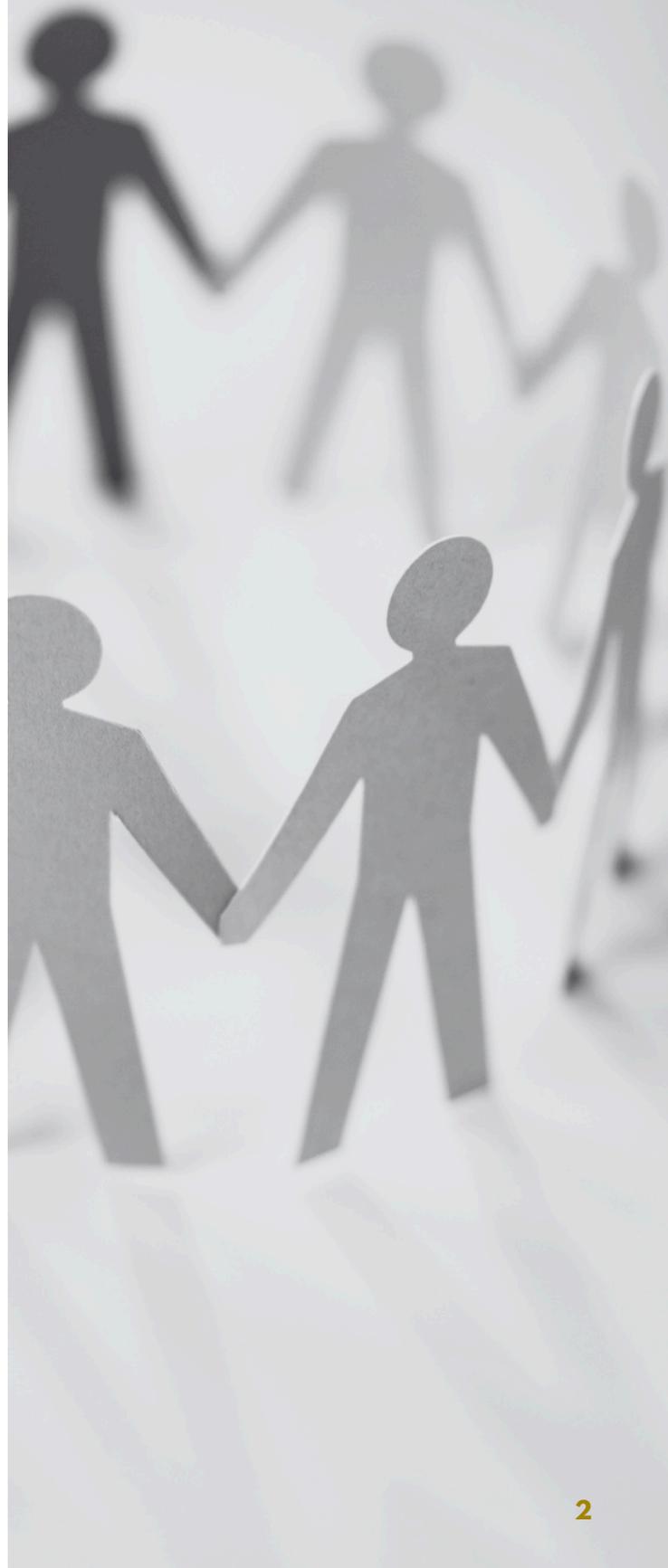
The Significance: Why is it Important?

The **Ontario Human Rights Code and the Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA)** define the legal responsibilities of employers to safeguard workers from instances of racism within workplaces in Ontario.

In accordance with OHSA section 32.0.1 (1) (a) and (c), each employer in Ontario is obligated to craft and review an annual policy addressing workplace violence. Similarly, in adherence to OHSA section 32.0.1 (b) and (c), every employer in Ontario is required to create and review an annual policy specifically addressing workplace harassment.

As highlighted above, the OHSA mandates employers in Ontario to evaluate the risks associated with workplace violence and harassment and formulate prevention programs. These policies may be consolidated into a comprehensive workplace violence and harassment policy, provided all described requirements are met.

In instances of workplace harassment at sites, work-related events, or within the workplace, employers, supervisors, and workers can be held accountable under both the OHSA and Ontario's human rights framework. This underscores the imperative for all parties, with a particular emphasis on employers, to establish and sustain a work environment free from discrimination and fostering well-being and belonging.



The Significance: Why is it Important?

Business Case: The Benefits of Investing in Workplace Culture

Investing in a positive workplace culture is essential for businesses to thrive and succeed. A supportive and inclusive environment boosts employee morale, productivity, and overall satisfaction, leading to numerous benefits:

Increased Motivation and Productivity: The vitality of your business is intricately linked to the motivation and dedication of your workforce. Engaged employees are more motivated and productive, driving business growth and success. A positive work culture encourages employees to perform at their best and meaningfully contribute to the company's goals.

Higher Retention Rates: A welcoming and inclusive workplace fosters loyalty and commitment among employees, ultimately reducing turnover rates. This saves businesses valuable time and resources spent on recruiting and training new hires.

Enhanced Communication and Collaboration: A positive work culture promotes open communication, trust, and teamwork. This facilitates effective collaboration among employees, leading to better problem solving and innovation.



Understanding Positive Workplace Culture

Defining the Essence of a Positive Workplace Culture

Positive company culture is an attitude and environment within an organization that cultivates collaboration, productivity, and satisfaction among its employees. A positive

working environment includes **1) managerial respect and trust, 2) employee collaboration and mutual respect, and 3) elimination of racism and discrimination.**

Factors that Affect Culture On-site:

Management Attitudes: The attitudes and behaviors of management set the tone for the entire workplace culture. When management demonstrates a commitment to fairness, inclusion, open communication, and employee well-being, it fosters a culture that values diverse perspectives, enhancing teamwork on-site and setting a positive example for the entire team.

Shared Beliefs and Values: A positive workplace culture is built on shared beliefs and values. They reflect behaviours that are/ are not tolerated on your sites. When employees collectively embrace principles of mutual respect and inclusion, it strengthens unity and cohesion within the team.

Accountability: Holding individuals accountable for their actions and decisions promotes transparency and trust within the organization. When accountability is upheld at all levels, it reinforces a culture of integrity and responsibility and underlines the shared values you're trying to foster on-site.

Employee Recognition: Recognizing achievements and providing equal opportunities for growth creates an environment where individuals from diverse backgrounds feel valued and motivated to contribute their unique skills.

Onboarding Practices: Effective onboarding practices, emphasizing the significance of inclusivity and mutual respect, play a pivotal role in fortifying a positive workplace culture on construction sites. By prioritizing these values during the onboarding process, new hires adopt the shared beliefs of the team, laying the foundation for a continuous integration of diversity and inclusion within the core culture of the construction site.

Understanding and actively cultivating a positive workplace culture involves a holistic approach that addresses both leadership and team members. By focusing on these critical elements, organizations can create an environment free of racism and discrimination, where employees thrive, innovation flourishes, and the business achieves sustained success.

Implementation Strategies: Laying the Foundations for a Positive Workplace Culture

① Facilitating Open Communication Spaces

Establishing an environment where open communication is not just encouraged but actively facilitated is instrumental in fostering a positive culture on-site. It involves creating platforms and channels that enable employees at all levels to express their ideas, concerns, and feedback safely.

Implementation Strategies:

Regular Check-ins & Site Briefings: Regular check-ins and briefings provide a forum for managers/superintendents to share feedback and, more importantly, allow employees to voice their thoughts and concerns.

Mechanisms to Obtain Feedback: Implementing confidential feedback systems through confidential pulse surveys managed by a third party or a suggestion box empowers employees to express their opinions without fear of retribution, fostering a culture of openness.



② Tackling Contentious Topics

Given the diverse workforce on construction sites, addressing sensitive topics, including diversity and inclusion, is imperative. Ignoring these discussions can lead to a fragmented and disengaged team.

Implementation Strategies:

Toolbox Talks on Diversity: Incorporating organized discussions on equity and inclusion through toolbox talks creates a platform for employees to express their perspectives on challenging topics, encouraging mutual understanding and empathy. Employers should consult with experts to help navigate these conversations.

Training on Cultural Sensitivity: Providing training sessions that emphasize cultural sensitivity ensures that team members appreciate and respect differences, promoting a more cohesive and inclusive construction environment.

③ Cultivating Conflict Resolution Skills

Conflicts are inevitable, but how they are managed can define a workplace culture. Cultivating robust conflict resolution skills ensures that disagreements are addressed constructively, promoting a harmonious work environment.

Implementation Strategies:

Training Programs: Providing regular training on conflict resolution equips employees with the tools to navigate disagreements professionally and collaboratively.

Mediation Resources: Having designated mediators within the organization helps address conflicts impartially, facilitating resolution and maintaining positive working relationships.

④ Creating Buy-in

The success of initiatives is dependent on how they are communicated and framed to the end user.



Implementation Strategies:

Positive Reinforcement: Use a positive framing that emphasizes the tangible benefits of inclusion and respect, such as improved productivity and enhanced team cohesion, rather than focusing solely on the need for diversity.

Avoiding Negative Approaches: Steering clear of blame and shame tactics is imperative; instead, centre the narrative on fostering a positive and inclusive work environment.

Strategic Messaging: Craft messages that go beyond legal compliance, highlighting the organizational benefits of managing a diverse workforce and fostering cultural awareness. Encourage stakeholders to identify early adopters, creating a sense of shared commitment and leadership within the organization.

Tips for an Effective Toolbox Talk

Tools for Conversation Starting:

- **Identify Similarities:** Focus on conversations that centre on similarities and shared hobbies. Creating a shared network helps promote shared goals amongst the workforce.
- **Acknowledge Significant Occasions:** Culturally/religiously significant occasions being acknowledged in the workplace through lunches, coffee breaks, email blasts or tool box talks creates an atmosphere of respect for each other's traditions.

Before the Talk:

- **Relevance:** Ensure the topic is pertinent to the audience.
- **Time Management:** Limit talks to 10-15 minutes, gradually increasing in subsequent sessions.
- **Speaker Selection:** Choose engaging speakers over authoritative figures.
- **Notice:** Provide advance notice to participants about the talk's topic.
- **Preparation:** Prepare simple, clear, and concise messaging.
- **Incentives:** Offer small incentives like coffee to create a positive atmosphere.

During the Talk:

- **Define Importance:** Clearly define the topic's significance to the audience.
- **Champion Positioning:** Present yourself as a champion open to all perspectives.
- **Two-Way Communication:** Facilitate a dialogue, respecting diverse opinions.
- **Emotional Awareness:** Be prepared for strong emotions and respond respectfully.
- **Simple Communication:** Use common language and terms for easy understanding.

After the Talk:

- **Seek Feedback:** Encourage employee feedback for continuous improvement.
- **Long-Term Communication:** Maintain ongoing communication for sustained impact. Provide time or space for people to discuss lessons learned or ask questions during the session, or privately afterwards.
- **Record Keeping:** Keep records of conducted talks for documentation and accountability.

Empowering with Resources

Tools and Materials for Implementation

- 1 RESCON CARE Committee ([HERE](#))
- 2 BuildForce Online Course - Working in a Respectful and Inclusive Workplace ([HERE](#))
- 3 BuildForce Online Course - Communication, Negotiation, and Conflict Resolution ([HERE](#))
- 4 IHSA - ToolBox Talk ([HERE](#))
- 5 CAC - Call to Action ([HERE](#))