

How to prevent racism in the workplace

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Workplace racism breeds an environment of discrimination, distrust, friction and potential violence or legal action. Whether racism originates with managers or colleagues, employees who are treated unfairly aren't allowed to achieve workplace success to the full potential.

Allowing racial discrimination to continue sends the message to employees that the behaviour is acceptable. Taking steps to prevent racism keeps all employees feeling safe while building a positive work environment. Prevention keeps the issue under control before it becomes a major problem.

Step 1

Write an anti-discrimination policy that specifically addresses racism. Include consequences for acts of racism in the workplace.

Step 2

Hire employees from all races and ethnic groups to create a diverse workforce. Inform job candidates before hiring them of your policy against racism and discrimination in any form.

Step 3

Promote employees based on merit without considering race or other irrelevant factors. This establishes a system of fair promotions so all employees feel valued. **(In the South African context though, Employment Equity and Affirmative Action must be factored in.)**

Step 4

Train employees on how to avoid discrimination and racism. Hold the training at least once a year to remind employees of how to conduct themselves in the workplace.

Step 5

Establish a committee in the workplace that focuses on anti-racism projects. Use the committee to identify potential discrimination issues based on race to begin finding solutions.

Step 6

Hold team-building sessions that give employees a chance to learn more about one another. Include brainstorming sessions that value all ideas.

Step 7

Treat all instances of racism the same according to the established policy. This lets the victims know you will handle the situation and all employees that you won't tolerate the behaviour.

Step 8

Encourage open communication with employees so they are more likely to report racism. Emphasise the importance of reporting racism even if an employee sees it happen to someone else. Investigate the claims right away.

Step 9

Establish an anonymous reporting system that allows employees to report racism without fear of retaliation. Follow up on reports of racism immediately.