

Guide

Turbulent Times Call for Bold Actions

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Hot Topic

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“It’s times like these that try our souls”...the shooting and violent events of the past few weeks have evoked raw emotions from every corner of our country and globe. From heartbroken, to horrified, to angered, to confused, to fearful and every emotion in between, we are, as a nation hurting and left wondering how this could be happening.

Diversity and Inclusion practitioners and champions are finding themselves wondering what to do. “How should we handle this?” “What are other companies doing?” “Should we say anything about this?” “What if we get pushback or backlash?”

While almost everyone is asking these question, it is, in some ways, indicative of our general hesitancy to address race issues head on. These conversations are hard and uncomfortable and there can be risk involved. But if we have learned anything from history, some of the greatest change occurs when we are bold and face these challenges with a willingness to leave our comfort zone.

At Diversity Best Practices, we recommend addressing the issues through communications and dialogue, both internally and externally. The fact of the matter is, your employees and your customers and clients are talking and thinking about it, potentially even consumed by the rampant inequities of racial justice and crimes of hate and discrimination against any population.

We have developed a few recommendations for your consideration including links to additional resources to support your efforts.

- Align your internal D&I commitment values to external marketplace and strategy by publically stating your support for collaboration, empathy, unity, and positive change in racial equity and justice.
- Be bold and leverage the power behind your status.
- Be courageous and have the difficult conversations at work (see: [Why Employers Need to Talk about the Police Shootings of Black People](#))
- Be prepared for reactions from your employees and customers alike. Like with any bold statement in business, you will receive support for your stance as well as dissention. Have a plan on how you will respond in both cases and be sure it is clear and consistent.

Here are some examples of how some organizations have addressed these recent events and past events of a similar nature.

- [Here’s How Google And Other Tech Companies Responded To This Week’s Police Shootings](#)
- [Kaiser Permanente CEO's Tough Words on Race: It's Time to Tell the Truth](#)
- [Nike CEO’s Letter to Employees About Race and Violence](#)
- [Cigna's Ferguson - St. Louis Internship Program Preserving the Roses of the community & Helping them Advance](#)



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Lastly, we offer some four general tips and two sample guidelines for facilitating these challenging conversations.

- Create and secure safe spaces for these conversations to take place.
- Look to your executives and Employee Resource Groups to help plan and support these initiatives.
- Consider using readings, text or video to ground the conversation. This ensures a consistent starting place for everyone and a place to come back to for the facilitator throughout the discussion.
- Create a follow up process to receive suggestions for actions participants might suggest as a result of these conversations and, more importantly, a process to respond to them.

Facilitating and handling difficult conversations are not to be underestimated. Ensure you have someone skilled at navigating diversity discussions, conflict resolution and/or focus groups. HR business partners as well as organizational development professionals are typically adept at these skillsets. DBP Solutions@Partners can provide skilled facilitation services as well.

1. *Ensure you set ground rules with all participants.*
2. *Allow for first time faux pas/mistakes.* Many of us avoid honest dialogues because we are afraid we'll say something wrong. And sometimes we do. If we are to have the difficult conversations, we have to allow for these mistakes.
3. *Forgive first mistakes, don't blame.* Take advantage of "Teachable moments" and hold people accountable for improved behavior and actions going forward.
4. *Assume a curious and positive intent.* When someone says something that could be offensive, or makes someone uncomfortable, it is much easier to respond to those statements if you assume that the person did not mean to offend.
5. *Listen more.* Understanding and empathy are critically important in furthering dialogue. Actively listening to others' perspectives, experiences and opinions will help to shed light on alternative views.
6. *As a facilitator or participant, be aware of your own "hot buttons."* It is important to recognize the words or topics that create visceral reactions for yourself. Be aware of those reactions, how you feel and how you respond to your own reactions. As a facilitator, be particularly aware and ensure you remain neutral in soliciting conversation and drawing out learnings.

Pre Read and Dialogue

(recommended for D&I councils, Employee Resource Groups, Leadership meetings)

1. Share readings with your D&I council as a pre-read.
2. Ensure there is diversity in the room and a skilled facilitator.
3. Set and establish ground rules for "safe space dialogue."
4. Facilitate an open dialogue. Some sample questions are:
 - Many companies spoke out against the Orlando shootings in support of the LGBTQ community. Some companies are beginning to do the same in this instance. What are the implications?
 - Are you hearing any water cooler conversations on these issues? If so, what are you hearing?
 - How have the recent events impacted your work?
 - How have the recent events impacted you personally?
 - Why is it important to discuss racial inequity and social injustice in the workplace?

- With regard to addressing these issues, how have the actions of your company mirrored the vision of D&I that your company has? Does anything need to change or be handled differently in order to align with your company values or strategy?

Same Group, Cross Group Dialogues

(recommended for ERGs/BRG's)

1. Create “safe space” for your employees to share their perspectives.
2. Create and facilitate various focus groups based on predetermined demographics (e.g. women, men, black, latino, white, asian, generational) to share their perspectives. Gather their input and insights.
3. Bring all groups together to share the data and insights.
4. Facilitate discussion on reactions and solutions

“Pre Read and Dialogue” and “Same Group, Cross Group Dialogue” are two suggested formats for discussing topics that employees may have different opinions on. These suggestions are not meant to limit any company’s style of communication, but rather provide other methods to initiate conversation.

Additional Resources to Facilitate Conversation

Center for Positive Organizations - [Finding the Strength to Lead in Trying Times](#)

[-Helping Your Workplace Heal](#)

National Organization for Women - [For White Allies: Challenging Everyday Racism](#)

Huffington Post - [Black and Blue Lives Matter: Turning Us and Them into We](#)

New York Times - [A Conversation on Race: A series of short films about identity in America.](#)

Slate - [Watch the Black Lives Matter Speech Four NBA Stars Gave at the ESPY Awards](#)