

PRIORITIZE THE ELIMINATION OF EXCLUSIONARY BEHAVIORS

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN SUMMARY

1. The first step for a company to take in creating an inclusive workplace culture is to formulate a statement of the types of exclusionary behavior that will not be tolerated in that workplace. This statement is designed to serve as a code of unacceptable conduct for the employees. We call this code the “PATH Charter.” – Pg. 125.
2. Producing a first draft of the PATH Charter can be done in a variety of ways: Company leadership can offer up a draft, a consultant can be brought in to provide the draft, a working group can be assembled to do the initial drafting, or a survey of employees can be used to identify the types of behavior that are to be viewed as unacceptable. – Pg. 125.
3. If it is to be effective, the PATH Charter must be “owned” by workplace participants. This can be only achieved if there is ample opportunity for everyone who will be subject to the PATH Charter to discuss, debate, and amend the draft. This opportunity for employee input before a final charter is agreed to is critical to assure universal buy-in. – Pg. 125.

The charter should:

4. Specifically identify the types of unacceptable behavior, such as showing disrespect for women by interrupting or talking over them, downplaying their contributions, failing to give them due credit for their accomplishments, limiting their access to advancement opportunities or career-enhancing resources, offering plum assignments primarily to men, or failing to include women in client pitch teams, network activities, or leadership development programs. – Pg. 126.
5. Acknowledge the difference between exclusionary behavior and vigorous disagreement. The former is unacceptable, the latter is needed, even essential, for arriving at the best outcome. – Pg. 127.
6. Make clear that maintaining an inclusive workplace depends on employees being willing to step in to challenge unacceptable behavior *when and to the extent they are comfortable doing so*. The PATH Charter needs to recognize that there will be situations when employees will find such direct challenges difficult because they fear adverse career consequences or backlash—but that reporting of the exclusionary behavior after the fact is appropriate. – Pg. 128.
7. Establish an easy-to-use mechanism for both targets and bystanders to report exclusionary behavior. This need not be formal or bureaucratic. The simple recognition that reporting such conduct to a manager or

senior executive with whom the employee feels comfortable talking with is appropriate and sufficient. – Pg. 132.

8. Explicitly guarantee protection against backlash or other adverse consequences for employees who challenge or report exclusionary behavior.
9. Designate a group of senior executives to serve as “interveners” who are specifically empowered and authorized to respond to reports of exclusionary behavior.
10. Provide a mechanism for dealing with individuals who consistently display a pattern of exclusionary behavior.
11. There will be ambiguous situations. For example, it may not always be possible to distinguish flirting from leering, or genuine affection from an assertion of power. Unwanted sexual attention is commonplace, but so is workplace romance. Make clear that intervention is appropriate when workplace decorum is disrupted, there appears to be a threat to psychological or physical safety, or there is a negative effect on team cohesiveness and collaboration. If there is any uncertainty, managers should always step in. Better that unwelcome behavior be stopped than a budding office romance suffer a setback.