Webinar Series
Advancing Equal Employment Opportunities and Creating Inclusive Workplaces

Part 6: "Building Intentional Culture" - How to foster a welcoming workplace

Hosted by: Southeast ADA Center; APSE – Employment First; Employment for All; WISE - Washington Initiative for Supported Employment

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Introductions

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Building Intentional Culture
How to foster a welcoming workplace
What is Organizational Culture?

Underlying beliefs, assumptions, values, and ways of interacting that contribute to the unique social and psychological environment of an organization.

Impacts of “Culture Fit”

What aspects of our culture are important for everyone to be aligned on?

Where could we benefit from new perspectives?

What aspects of our culture should be flexible?

So What Works?

People stay longer in organizations when they:

- Are able to learn and grow
- Feel both independent and supported
- Can specialize in areas where they naturally do well
- Fit well within the culture

Knowing more about your culture can help you understand who fits well, who doesn’t, and why?

Cultural Norms

How an organization’s culture presents itself

Behaviors and rules of conduct can be:

- formal or informal
- healthy or unhealthy
- often not actively reflected on or challenged unless new people come in
Example - Formal & Healthy Norms

Culture: “Learning Organization”

Norms

• Annual training budgets for staff
• Trainings taken seriously (informal)
• Leadership open to new ideas

Example - Formal & Unhealthy Norms

Culture: “Closed-door Decision Making Process”

Norms

• No mechanism for collecting staff input
• No transparency around items such as budgets, priorities, hiring
• Staff are not sure how decisions get made

Changing Norms

Formally & Informally

Be intentional about how you contribute to your organization’s culture:

• Recognize, reflect on, and acknowledge unhealthy norms
• React with intention
• Prepare to welcome someone that will change the culture
• Start conversations

Inclusion & Equity
Group Activities

Organizational Culture Snapshot
Complete individually and review with your team or department

Exclusive vs. Inclusive Norms Scales
Typically work on this within your program teams and discuss similarities and differences

Organizational Culture Snapshot

Heroes
who is seen as the hero around here? why?

why do people succeed or fail here?

Norms & Typical Behavior

Norms and Typical Behaviors
communication styles; comfort with conflict; competition vs. collaboration; perfectionism; ways of celebrating; workaholics; sense of urgency; boundaries; allowance for vulnerability/emotion; etc.
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Exclusive vs. Inclusive Norms Scales

Exclusive vs. Inclusive Organizational Norms 1

- Individualism & Competition
  - Single charismatic leaders
  - Working in isolation from each other
  - Taking unearned credit

- Collaboration & Collectivism
  - Working together
  - Taking time to build trusting relationships
  - Focus on “building a bigger pie” vs. fighting over a slice

- Paternalism & Power-Holding
  - No consultation or transparency in decision-making
  - Holding on to resources, security-minded, Official title outweighs experience
  - Ideas are evaluated based on rank

- Partnership & Power-Sharing
  - Decision-making is clear and affected parties are consulted
  - Ideas from others are respected and space is made for them to be heard
  - Budgets are made available for review

Exclusive vs. Inclusive Organizational Norms 2

- Fear of Conflict and Defensiveness
  - Publicness valued over honesty
  - Those who bring up discomfort for others are stigmatized
  - Feedback is not given in a timely manner
  - Focus on protecting power and comfort instead of addressing issues

- Growth and Vulnerability
  - Peers continuously learn from each other
  - Feedback is given & received objectively
  - Managers are skilled at providing timely, supportive feedback in culturally and individually responsive ways
  - Clear structure is in place to hear and address grievances

- Urgency and Over-Working
  - There is a continual sense of urgency for deliverables, but not for community building or capacity building
  - Strong focus on quantity
  - Less focus put on the cost of growth on people and relationships

- Sustainability and Self-Care
  - Space given to address what is important that comes up in the moment
  - Flexibility in timeframes are set
  - Cost/benefit analysis includes all costs
  - Focus on sustainability and quality
  - Activating encouraging a culture of self-care
  - Support of time boundaries, conscientious of parental needs, personal health issues
  - Work plans enable space for unpredictable tasks and creative innovations

Exclusive vs. Inclusive Organizational Norms 3

- Perfectionism
  - Mistakes are seen as personal and reflect badly on the individual
  - Little time for learning
  - As new hires learn their job it is subtly or directly communicated that they must “prove themselves”

- Appreciation and Support
  - Mistakes are valued as opportunities for learning
  - People verbally show their appreciation for one another
  - As new hires learn their job, they are given the freedom to make mistakes and learn from them
Addressing Unhealthy Norms

- Urgency and Overworking
  - Understand things may take longer than expected
  - Learn from past experiences
  - Manage with data
  - Write realistic funding proposals and workplans

- Paternalism and Power-Hoarding
  - Everyone understands who makes decisions
  - Leaders are trained to develop the power and skills of others
  - Shared decision-making
  - Change is a practice

Equity & Inclusion

How do you recruit and include new people who may evolve your culture?

In order to:
- Include more perspectives on the team
- Add more skills, styles, and approaches to the work
- Reach more people with services

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Parts 7 & 8: Save the Dates!
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