

MICROAGGRESSIONS IN VIRTUAL WORKPLACES

Even before the Covid-19 Pandemic, more companies were shifting to offering more flexibility and remote work options for reasons such as cost savings, better retention, increased flexibility for all, reduced commute times, or increased productivity. Increasingly, companies are thinking through ways to increase employee happiness and retention, as employment trends continue to show an increase in the number of employees quitting their jobs after the global pandemic- referred to as the "Great Resignation". Reports show that for some, flexibility and autonomy are just as important as pay in employee satisfaction and retention and are taking on an increasing value. A study conducted by Employment Hero shows that remote workers take less vacation time per year, feel a greater sense of belonging and communicate more frequently with their teams online, and approximately 55% of remote workers would leave their company if they were forced to return to the office.

Remote work is the way of the now and of the future. Increasingly, brick and mortar giant companies like airbnb, twitter and slack have transitioned either to a full or hybrid remote work environment. This is good news for their bottom line, but could spell trouble for diversity, equity and inclusion practices, another practice increasingly adopted and incorporated into organizational behavior for better bottom line. It is no secret that virtual environments have been plagued by instances of racism, sexism and microaggressions. Even AI bots can become racist in their interactions after only 1 day online.

So how can organizations continue to ensure that their Diversity, Equity and Inclusion measures are updated to reflect the rising trend in remote flexibility options for increasing the bottom line?

About Us

OPSTRATA is a social impact consulting firm which exists to support organizations in reaching their goals for sustainable and meaningful outcomes for people and communities. Our number one focus is the quality of the work and services that we provide. As a minority and women owned firm, we specialize in culturally responsive and inclusive practices when engaging with clients and generating results.

OPSTRATA blends a range of approaches to ensure that our clients are employing the most efficient strategies for success. Our approach to problem solving ensures that organizations are developing structures and programming that help to meet their mission and goals. We seek to build the capacity of our partners in the social sector to engage in results oriented and evidence-based decision making while infusing culturally responsive practices along the way. Entering each engagement with an open-mind and leaving prescriptive processes aside, we seek collaborative solutions and feasible opportunities for you and your team.



Avoiding Microaggression Pitfalls in the Remote Space

- Provide staff with virtual background options where you can't see markers that could lead to sharing of private information (how their home looks, pictures of children, etc)
- Provide multiple engagement options for staff (chat, polls) other than video or speaking, which can reinforce power and privilege dynamics
- Review existing policies that have been adopted by your company and check to see if there could be a remote counterpart; for instance- in office dress code
- Allow time for bio-breaks such as needing to use the restroom or provide guidance that it is okay to do so (turn off mic/camera etc)
- Monitor chat and interactions and have a process in place to address issues that may arise (anonymous reporting, follow up meetings, question at staff check ins)
- Train managers to on virtual microaggressions and how to support staff that experience them

As trends for remote work and DEI increase, it is just as important that companies are putting as much care and thought into DEI measures in a virtual environment. Remember, interactions online can be recorded and should be addressed with the same seriousness as discrimination in a physical environment. Though they can look slightly different, the impact on staff and company culture is the same.