



**INCLUSION & DIVERSITY**

# PLAYBOOK



SHRM is pleased to offer this step-by-step guide designed to **empower HR practitioners and business leaders** in creating inclusive, empathetic, and sustainable workplace cultures.

SHRM recognizes that fostering an inclusive and diverse workplace is not just a moral imperative but a business necessity. This playbook serves as a strategic guide for HR professionals to create an environment where every employee feels valued, respected, and empowered to contribute their unique perspectives.

By embedding inclusion and diversity (I&D) into every facet of our HR practices—from recruitment and retention to training and development—we commit to building a culture that celebrates differences and drives innovation. Our approach is grounded in the beliefs that diversity fuels creativity and inclusion unlocks the potential of our workforce, leading to sustainable growth and success.

SHRM's guidance in this playbook is rooted in extensive research and years of anecdotal evidence, reflecting both successful practices and lessons learned from less effective strategies.

**For example:**

**68%** of U.S. workers want their organizations to make diversity a greater strategic imperative by focusing on the key systems that create an inclusive employee experience.

**53%** of those surveyed link DEI to business polarization.

**69%** said the results of corporate diversity programs were mixed at best, with 10% saying they had actually done more harm than good.

By focusing on what truly matters and leveraging a wealth of knowledge and experience, SHRM's approach provides a realistic and effective road map for organizations striving to make meaningful progress on I&D. Together, we can move beyond mere compliance to create a thriving ecosystem where everyone feels valued and empowered.



# 1 NAVIGATING THE JOURNEY OF CHANGE: 4 Steps to Overcome Roadblocks, Embracing the Scenic Route, and Steering Toward Success

Change is a journey, and the road ahead will continue to be challenging, but the one thing we are sure of is that the destination is worth the effort.

# 2 6 STEPS TO BUILD AN INCLUSIVE AND EMPATHETIC WORKPLACE

Does your company or organization present a workplace in which everyone feels valued and heard and empathy is expected?

# 3 5 STEPS TO ENCOURAGE CIVIL CONVERSATIONS AT WORK

SHRM believes everyone can play a role in transforming workplaces to be more civil, one conversation at a time.

# 4 6 STEPS TO FOSTER INCLUSION IN THE WORKPLACE

In our increasingly diverse world, fostering inclusion within the workplace has become imperative for achieving a truly collaborative environment and driving overall business success.

# 5 BEING A WORKPLACE ALLY

Workplace allies serve as ambassadors for change and model a sense of empathy. Companies should recognize allyship at every level and provide open forums for employees to learn, engage, and practice inclusive behaviors.

# 6 7 STEPS TO REDUCE BIAS IN YOUR HIRING PROCESS

Did you know that an unfair and biased hiring process can seriously undermine your company's success and ultimately erode your reputation?

# 7 SHRM INCLUSIVE WORKPLACE CULTURE SPECIALTY CREDENTIAL AND COURSES

Explore SHRM courses and empower yourself to reinforce positive change rooted in inclusion and belonging.

# 8 HOW TO AVOID AGEISM

Employers that don't value older workers are doing themselves a disservice.

# 1

## NAVIGATING THE JOURNEY OF CHANGE

### 4 Steps to Overcome Roadblocks, Embracing the Scenic Route, and Steering Toward Success

Change is a journey, and the road ahead will continue to be challenging, but the one thing we are sure of is that the destination is worth the effort. As HR professionals, you are navigating the path to positive and productive change, and we acknowledge the toll this journey can take on you individually.

First and foremost, thank you for your tireless dedication to constantly improving the world of work. Here's what to expect as we travel this road together.

---

### WATCH JOHNNY C. TAYLOR, JR., SHRM-SCP, ON LEADERSHIP AND INCLUSION

[/ Jessica Kriegel - Culture Leaders Interview](#)

In this special episode of Culture Leaders, Dr. Jessica Kriegel sits down with SHRM President and Chief Executive Officer Johnny C. Taylor, Jr., SHRM-SCP, to discuss the challenges and opportunities organizations face when implementing I&D initiatives.

### ACCESS THE POLICY TEMPLATE

[/ Inclusion Code of Conduct Template](#)

## ROADBLOCKS AND DETOURS

Along the way, you'll likely encounter resistance based on confusion and even opposition from leadership and staff. Navigate these obstacles by staying clear, concise, and consistent in your communication and initiatives.

## THE LONG DRIVE

There will be days when the road seems too long and the journey too tough, but remember, the destination is worth it. Real behavior change is a hard road, but by viewing challenges as opportunities, we can steer toward better outcomes for your team and company—and collectively for the entire world of work.

## THE SCENIC ROUTE

It is OK to hit pause and reflect on the great work you are doing, take pride in your accomplishments thus far, and take time for self-care. Like they say on airplanes—put your mask on before helping others. On this journey of change, please take time to rejuvenate yourself so that you can keep on pushing uphill to transform the world around us.

## KEEP UPDATING THE ROAD MAP

This journey is a long one, with many twists and turns. It's only by listening to the signals and measuring our progress that we can adjust our course and unlock the next chapter. Building a world of work that truly works for all will take time, and while there may be junctions that change our route, staying committed will ensure we reach our destination with real, lasting impact.

# 2

## 6 STEPS TO BUILD AN INCLUSIVE AND EMPATHETIC WORKPLACE

Does your company or organization present a workplace culture in which everyone feels valued and heard and empathy is expected?

Creating a culture in which people are respected and appreciated requires a level of effort, empathy, and investment that your organization's culture may not be getting.

Think of diversity as being similar to selecting people for a chorus who have different musical backgrounds, vocal ranges, and abilities. Inclusion means making sure that those different voices are heard, valued, and contribute to the performance.

When employees who are different from their colleagues can flourish, the company benefits from their ideas, skills, and engagement. The retention rate of those workers also rises.

---

### SHRM Member Resources

---

/ **How-To Guide:** [How to Develop an Inclusion and Diversity Initiative](#)

/ **Read More:** [Introduction to the Human Resources Discipline of Inclusion and Diversity / Understanding and Developing Organizational Culture](#)

/ **Train Your Staff:** Inclusive, diverse, flexible, and engaging workplaces are where people thrive. The [Inclusive Workplace Culture Specialty Credential](#) gives HR professionals the strategies and tools needed to successfully shift organizational culture.

### EDUCATE YOUR LEADERS

Leaders must create an inclusive workplace experience, proving to employees that inclusion is at the core of the organization.

### FORM AN INCLUSION COUNCIL

Create a council with 8-12 influential leaders who meet regularly to advocate inclusiveness to their peers and the C-suite.

### CELEBRATE EMPLOYEES' DIFFERENCES

Celebrate and acknowledge the diversity within your team. Invite all employees to share their backgrounds and traditions in the workplace.

### LISTEN TO EMPLOYEES

Provide employees with a safe place to voice their opinions, and use this information as you create a culture that is authentic to your brand.

### HOLD MORE EFFECTIVE MEETINGS

Facilitate inclusion for all meetings by making sure all participants have the materials and technology needed and all voices have the opportunity to be heard.

### COMMUNICATE GOALS AND MEASURE PROGRESS

Establish and clearly communicate specific, measurable, and time-bound goals.

# 3

## 5 STEPS TO ENCOURAGE CIVIL CONVERSATIONS AT WORK

At SHRM, we believe civility is a cornerstone of workplace culture that allows people and business to thrive. Civility fosters respect, empathy, and the productive exchange of ideas and opinions.

SHRM believes everyone can play a role in transforming workplaces to be more civil, one conversation at a time. To encourage civil conversations in the workplace, SHRM has developed a practical guide for leaders and managers. This guide is part of SHRM's Civility Starter Kit, and when combined with the kit's Cards Against Incivility, these resources offer a turnkey opportunity to equip teams with the skills needed to practice civil conversations. This guide offers five clear, actionable steps to turn tough talks into teamwork, discord into dialogue, and conflict into opportunity, ultimately setting teams up for success. It also highlights additional resources to help team members keep it civil at work.

By actively cultivating civil environments within individual teams, we can collectively ensure respectful and productive interactions across departments and throughout organizations. Every leader and team has a crucial role to play, and fostering civility is a commitment the entire organization must embrace.

---

### ACCESS THE CIVILITY STARTER KIT

[/ The SHRM Civility Starter Kit](#)

The SHRM Civility Starter Kit contains the latest SHRM Civility Index and new tools for fostering civil conversations. Use it as your guide to cultivate a more civil and productive workplace.

### EDUCATE YOURSELF

It is crucial to equip yourself with knowledge and understanding of the current state of civility and incivility in both the workplace and society at large.

### ESTABLISH A SHARED UNDERSTANDING OF CIVILITY

Building a strong foundation for team civility starts with a shared understanding of civility, often called a shared mental model. By ensuring everyone agrees on civil and uncivil behavior, your team can communicate and resolve disagreements better.

### ESTABLISH AND FOSTER TEAM NORMS FOR MUTUAL RESPECT

Following a shared understanding of civility, establishing clear team norms for mutual respect will further guide your team's interactions. These norms will define how your team interacts, communicates, and resolves conflicts in a civil manner. These norms are specific behaviors expected from everyone in the group.

### PROMOTE A CULTURE OF CIVILITY

With shared definitions of civility and team norms for mutual respect in place, you can actively cultivate a culture of civility within your team. This culture reflects employee expectations of how leadership and managers utilize policies, procedures, and practices to maintain a respectful and civil work environment. These behaviors are expected not only from leaders but also from team members.

### BECOME A CATALYST FOR CIVILITY

Remember, fostering civility is an ongoing process, and doing so will further cement civility as a norm and expectation in your workplace culture.

# 4

## 6 STEPS TO FOSTER INCLUSION IN THE WORKPLACE

In our increasingly diverse world, fostering inclusion within the workplace has become imperative for achieving a truly collaborative environment and driving overall business success.

Inclusion transcends mere representation; it embodies the practice of ensuring that every employee feels valued, respected, and empowered to contribute fully. A mission-driven approach to inclusion not only enhances employee morale and retention but also cultivates innovation, as diverse perspectives lead to more creative problem-solving and decision-making.

As leaders, it is our responsibility to implement robust strategies that promote an inclusive culture, which goes beyond policies and training to embrace genuine engagement with all team members. By implementing these feedback points and leveraging available resources, organizations can strengthen their commitment to inclusion, fostering a thriving workplace environment where diversity is embraced as a valuable asset.

---

SHRM Member Resource

---

/ **Template:** [Belonging & Inclusive Culture Policy Template](#)

### UNDERSTAND THE IMPORTANCE OF INCLUSION

Recognizing the significance of inclusion is essential for fostering a diverse environment.

### ESTABLISH A CLEAR INCLUSION POLICY

Develop a comprehensive inclusion policy that reflects your organization's commitment to inclusion and diversity.

### PROVIDE TRAINING AND RESOURCES

Implement ongoing training programs focused on inclusion and diversity.

### FOSTER OPEN COMMUNICATION

Encourage open dialogue about inclusion at all levels of the organization.

### MEASURE PROGRESS

Establish key performance indicators (KPIs) to evaluate the effectiveness of your inclusion initiatives.

### CELEBRATE INCLUSION AND DIVERSITY

Actively highlight the diverse backgrounds and perspectives within your organization through events and initiatives.

# 5

## BEING A WORKPLACE ALLY

Workplace allies serve as ambassadors for change and model a sense of empathy. Companies should recognize allyship at every level and provide open forums for employees to learn, engage, and practice inclusive behaviors.

Everyone can be an advocate for underrepresented people in small ways. Our genders, races, ethnicities, religions, disabilities, and sexual orientations—all of these give us more or fewer opportunities for success. Allyship is about understanding that imbalance in opportunity and working to correct it.

Employees who serve as allies to their co-workers follow simple actions that will have lasting, beneficial effects on others' careers. This helps create an inclusive work environment. Allies can open career doors, but they don't have to be able to directly promote others. They can also serve as mentors or sponsors to people from underrepresented groups, as well as provide career nudges.

---

### SHRM Member Resources

---

/ **Leaders:** [Sharing Your Own Mental Health Story Can Help You Become a Better Ally](#)

/ **Full Article:** [Learn to Be a Workplace Mental Health Ally](#)

/ **Toolkit:** [Introduction to the Human Resources Discipline of Inclusion and Diversity](#)

/ **Train Your Staff:** Inclusive, diverse, flexible, and engaging workplaces are where people thrive. The [Inclusive Workplace Culture Specialty Credential](#) gives HR professionals the strategies and tools needed to successfully shift organizational culture.

### PROVIDE DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Identify and recommend employees from underrepresented groups for stretch assignments.

### PUT OTHERS IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Invite members of underrepresented groups to speak at staff meetings, write for company newsletters, or take on other highly visible roles.

### PROMOTE FAIRNESS

Use objective criteria to equitably evaluate employees in similar roles, and tie the feedback to business goals.

### BE AN ADVOCATE

Encourage diverse representation at events or speaking engagements.



# 6

## 7 STEPS TO REDUCE BIAS IN YOUR HIRING PROCESS

Do you know that an unfair and biased hiring process can seriously undermine your company's success?

We all have implicit biases that affect the way we live and work. Identifying how these biases may negatively affect workers is pivotal in the development of workplace equality. A vast body of research shows that the hiring process is often biased and unfair. Unconscious racism, ageism, and sexism play a big role in our hiring decisions.

Left unchecked, biases can shape a company's or industry's culture and norms and hinder inclusion, recruiting, promotion, and retention. When we think of kindergarten teachers as female and engineers as male, for example, we are likely to apply different standards when hiring, promoting, and evaluating job performance. Managers must learn to remove this bias from their practices and procedures.

An effective diversity recruitment program involves taking a close look at every step of the recruitment process, from sourcing and recruitment marketing to screening and interview practices to presenting an offer. Finally, remember that 92% of respondents in a recent study said that when looking for a job, they specifically look for organizations that demonstrate empathy.

---

### SHRM Member Resources

---

/ [PDF: Hiring Bias and Workplace Bias](#)

/ [Full Article: How Typical Recruiting Mistakes Undermine Diversity Goals](#)

/ [Train Your Staff](#): Inclusive, diverse, flexible, and engaging workplaces are where people thrive. The [Inclusive Workplace Culture Specialty Credential](#) gives HR professionals the strategies and tools needed to successfully shift organizational culture.

### SEEK TO UNDERSTAND

Create an organizational conversation by offering awareness training to help your employees learn what unconscious bias is.

### REWORK YOUR JOB DESCRIPTIONS

Use software programs that highlight and remove stereotypically gendered words.

### REVIEW RESUMES WITH AN OPEN MIND

Focus on your candidates' specific qualifications and talents, not on demographic characteristics.

### GIVE A WORK-SAMPLE TEST

Evaluating work-sample tests from multiple applicants forces employers to critique the quality of candidates' work rather than unconsciously judge them based on appearance, gender, age, and even personality.

### STANDARDIZE INTERVIEWS

Develop structured interviews and use an interview score card to grade candidates' responses on a predetermined scale.

### CONSIDER LIKABILITY

Determine how important good cultural fit is to you and rate candidates as you would on their other skills.

### SET DIVERSITY GOALS

At the end of every hiring process, track how well you've done against the diversity goals you set out to achieve.

# 7

## SHRM INCLUSIVE WORKPLACE CULTURE SPECIALTY CREDENTIAL AND COURSES

Empower yourself to reinforce positive change.

Toxic workplaces are the driving reason why workers leave their jobs. In fact, organizations that exhibit low empathy often exhibit high rates of turnover. This has a high economic cost for businesses.

- Are your employees able to voice work-related opinions—and feel safe doing so?
- Are nonwork discussions and opinions on topics such as politics dividing your workforce?
- Do your employees dread coming to work?
- Are all voices heard, valued, and contributing to the organization's performance?

Building an inclusive company culture, one that promotes empathy for all at all levels of the organization, is now more crucial than ever. Drive authentic organizational impact and become a true business partner with a SHRM educational program. Become the expert, the leader, the change agent. Intentionally engage your workforce to promote sustainable productivity. When you foster an inclusive, diverse, empathetic, and engaging culture, it shows up in the bottom line. Let a SHRM educational program guide the way!

---

*“We know workplace culture has an extraordinary impact on people and that the importance of creating and fostering a positive culture has never been greater. Positive workplace cultures are characterized by high rates of retention, engagement, innovation, and productivity, and the common theme running through each of these is the critical role of inclusive practices. The SHRM Inclusive Workplace Culture Specialty Credential demonstrates the importance of bringing together knowledge and application to advance the transformation of workplace cultures where many talents can come together to serve a common purpose.”*

—Jim Link, SHRM-SCP, CHRO at SHRM

### LIVE ONLINE OFFERINGS

#### [/ Inclusive Workplace Culture: Leading and Sustaining a Culture Transformation](#)

| Live Online + In Person |

Explore techniques to create, maintain, and measure an inclusive workplace through communication, mentorship, hiring practices, executive-level support, facilitation, listening, data reporting, and training.

#### [/ SHRM Inclusive Workplace Culture Specialty Credential](#)

Unlock the organizational gains of a diverse and dedicated workforce by learning how to maximize potential through fostering a positive work environment rooted in inclusion and belonging.

### SELF-PACED OFFERINGS

#### [/ Cultivating Support for an Inclusive Workplace Culture](#)

Learn how to tailor the inclusive workplace culture story with leaders, managers, and employees.

#### [/ Introducing Allyship to Foster an Inclusive Workplace Culture](#)

Explore allyship programs as one approach to improving the inclusiveness of your workplace culture.

#### [/ Measuring Successes of an Inclusive Workplace Culture](#)

Put science behind your inclusion efforts—become familiar with definitions and high-level data analysis concepts to measure the impact of workplace culture.

# 8

## HOW TO AVOID AGEISM

Employers that don't value older workers are doing themselves a disservice.

Today's older workers are better educated and living longer than any previous generation. They also want to remain in the workforce longer, but discrimination and outdated assumptions are making that a tricky proposition for many experienced employees. Overt acts of ageism are only expected to get worse as the number of older workers grows.

In fact, the 65-and-older age group is projected to experience faster labor force growth rates annually than any other group. At the same time, less than 10% of companies with developed inclusion and diversity strategies include age in those strategies.

There's substantial evidence that an age-diverse workplace can lead to more effective teams and companies. Research shows that adding some experienced workers results in all team members improving. Companies that allow biases to run rampant are sabotaging their ability to hire and retain talented teams when there is an aging workforce that wants to remain actively employed.

---

### SHRM Member Resources

---

/ [Read More: Women and Ageism: Unpacking an 'Ongoing Issue' at Work](#)

/ [Read More: Combating Age Bias in the Workplace](#) / [SHRM Research: The Multi-Generational Workforce: Age and the U.S. Worker Experience](#)

/ [Toolkit: Employing Older Workers](#)

/ **Train Your Staff:** Inclusive, diverse, flexible, and engaging workplaces are where people thrive. The [Inclusive Workplace Culture Specialty Credential](#) gives HR professionals the strategies and tools needed to successfully shift organizational culture.

### REVIEW YOUR ORGANIZATION'S PRACTICES AND POLICIES

Find and eliminate features, including age-specific language, that may reveal outdated assumptions about older workers.

### KNOW YOUR WORKERS' NEEDS

Conduct a survey to find out what your workers, including older workers, value most. Guessing your employees' needs without speaking to them often results in assumptions that are based on age-related myths and misperceptions.

### EXAMINE YOUR RECRUITMENT PRACTICES

Train recruiters and interviewers to avoid ageist assumptions, such as that younger workers will work for a lower salary or that older workers are not technologically savvy.

### FOCUS ON HIRING OLDER WORKERS

Create partnerships with organizations that specialize in helping older workers and retirees locate employment opportunities.

### INCLUDE AGE AS PART OF YOUR INCLUSION AND DIVERSITY PROGRAM

Promote a workplace culture that recognizes ability regardless of age and rejects age stereotypes, just as it would reject stereotypes involving race, disability, national origin, religion, or sex.

### FOSTER A MULTIGENERATIONAL CULTURE

Offer opportunities for multigenerational employee interaction, learning, and development, such as career counseling or reverse-age mentoring.



# Leading the Way with **Inclusion and Diversity**

---

[shrm.org/Inclusion-Diversity](https://shrm.org/Inclusion-Diversity)