

Simple Reminders For Developing Healthy Workplace Culture

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All work environments develop their own workplace cultures, regardless of company size or industry. The role of culture, when consciously shaped and reinforced, is to bring consistency to the work environment through clear expectations. Workplace cultures shape, reflect, and sustain business values and ethics, and condemn harassment and discrimination. This is often accomplished through the physical environment of the office (i.e. open door policy); strong workplace policies prohibiting sexual harassment and discrimination; workplace training; and a complaints process that protects employees from retaliation. Despite even best laid plans for improving workplace culture, actual behavior and human tendencies should not be forgotten. The adverse consequences for victims of harassment or discrimination translate into a less productive work environment. The costs to employers include increased turnover and absenteeism, lower individual and group productivity, loss of managerial time to investigate complaints, and legal expenses, including litigation costs and paying damages to victims. Employees who become more aware of what behaviors constitute harassment and discrimination may be motivated to avoid such behaviors as well as to enforce that norm in the workplace. A culture of respect for workplace policies will pay off in the form of more professional working relationships and greater productivity. In short, expectation and communication are key. Supervisors and managers play a special role in modeling and enforcing the employer's expectations for its workplace culture. These individuals should be reminded that nothing takes the joy out of the workplace like having to defend against a claim of harassment or discrimination -- however trivial or baseless.

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