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THE TIME'S UP GUIDE TO

Equity and Inclusion During Crisis

SECOND EDITION
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Introduction:
In This Together

This second edition of The *TIME'S UP Guide to Equity and Inclusion During Crisis* adds urgent and practical advice for leaders committed to leading anti-racist organizations. The convergence of compounding crises – the coronavirus pandemic, the devastating economic fallout that has accompanied it, and the long overdue reaction to state-sanctioned, racialized violence – has cast an irrefutable spotlight on social and workplace inequity and demonstrates how systemic sexism and racism show up in all aspects of U.S. society. These crises demand immediate action from organizations across sectors. Leaders must navigate them with compassion and resolve, root out inequities that exist within their organizations, define inclusive values, and set up anti-racist practices that will guide their communities now and moving forward.

Prioritizing diversity and inclusion within organizations is a moral obligation and a strategic business decision. Prior to this period of essential examination and transformation, the business case for diversity was overwhelming, and now is not the time to lose any ground. The national reckoning on race makes it even more urgent to examine and combat systemic racism in workplaces of all types and across all industries. We believe that the fight to end gender discrimination and the fight to end systemic racism are *all* our fight. Both require rigorous self-examination, strong leadership from the top, and a shared commitment to structural change.

> *Prioritizing diversity and inclusion within organizations is a moral obligation and a strategic business decision.*

Staying invested in building a diverse and inclusive work environment will ensure you retain the best talent, avoid the high cost of turnover, and exhibit the values that clients, customers, and consumers want to see from business in these difficult times. Here are practical actions you can take to build an anti-racist workplace, care for your people, equalize your workplace, and demonstrate your leadership.

Building an
Anti-Racist Workplace

Own the fight to end systemic racism at work

As with all organizational imperatives, the fight to end systemic racism needs to be led from the top and be informed by your employees, especially women of color who have been historically and systematically marginalized. But as you undertake this work, recognize that the systemic racism we are now grappling with in our national dialogue is NOT new.

Racism has chipped away at Black lives every single day for generations, including those of your Black leaders, colleagues, and staff. Consider the wider context of this moment: the killing of Black people by state-sanctioned racialized violence is unfolding amid a pandemic that is disproportionately impacting Black and Latinx communities. This is all happening because of institutionalized racism and sexism, which governs how we care for people in this country. Now is the moment to reflect deeply, examine your own organization, and speak up and show up for your staff.

Do not be silent in this moment

This is a moment when leaders everywhere need to speak out. If you are unsure what to say, seek guidance from your Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Lead or outside advocacy groups in developing a message that is authentic to you and your organization.

▸ **Don't let fear of saying the wrong thing keep you silent.** If you make a mistake, apologize quickly and reiterate your commitment to combatting racial and gender discrimination.

▸ **Know that silence can feel like violence for Black communities.** Black people across the country are calling on all of us to acknowledge the harm felt by their communities. Saying nothing builds on those acts of violence.

> *The fight to end systemic racism needs to be led from the top and be informed by your employees, especially women of color who have been historically and systematically marginalized.*

▶ **Be humble about where you're starting from and commit to backing up public statements with action.** If you have not done this already, now is the time to add anti-racism to your core values and operationalize those values by evaluating all of your policies and decision-making processes through an anti-racist lens.

Don't just signal support. Root out racism at your workplace

▶ **Assess the demographic makeup of your entire staff**, at all levels, and up and down the wage scale.

▶ **Establish clear goals** tied to becoming an anti-racist workplace and attach owners and success metrics to them so that you can track your organization's journey over time.

▶ **Apply an [intersectional] analysis** as you seek to understand and improve the experience of your Black staff. Recognize the overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination some of them may face because of their race, gender, sexuality, gender identity, ability, and other critical forms of identity, and center their experiences in this work.

▶ **Investigate the effects of your external actions on Black people and people of color, particularly women.** How do the products you produce or the policies you lobby for impact Black communities? What you can do through your business to support Black women? The work that your organization does externally is directly connected to your internal culture. It can either build credibility and trust or undermine your stated values.

▶ **Put resources towards efforts that actually enhance the lives of Black staff and Black communities.** Invest in structural changes that will genuinely benefit communities of color. For example, you can commit to a strategic planning process that centers on anti-racism; hire facilitators that specialize in racial equity and racial healing; or design long-term programs to develop and retain your Black talent. Set significant resources aside for training that effectively teaches people of all races and genders how to combat racist behavior, including unconscious bias and microaggressions.

Hold conversations to bring awareness to racism at work and create genuinely safe spaces where people can share their experiences openly

▶ **Hold space for your Black employees to gather and respect their boundaries and wellbeing.** This includes creating, funding, and prioritizing Black Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) and making time and space, either virtually or in real life, for ERGs to gather, support one another, and raise issues, such as toxic workplace culture, fears of retaliation, and other barriers that prevent clear pathways to career growth and promotions. And while this should be a safe space for your Black employees, communicate that there are channels – including anonymous ones – to address and correct issues raised by your Black ERG.

▶ **Lead with empathy.** This is likely an exhausting and emotionally trying time for your Black staff. Ensure that they understand paid time off is an available option and that work can be reallocated in the interim. Respect the response you receive and make the offer again at a later time without an expiration date.

Learn the Definition of Anti-racism and Build Your Anti-racist Vocabulary

Start by grounding yourself in this work and examining your own privilege. Here are some key terms to learn as you delve deeper into these issues:

- **Systemic Racism:** Systemic racism is the complex interaction of culture, policy, and institutions that contribute to false hierarchies of human value.

- **Anti-Racism**, [as described](#) by Ibram X. Kendi, is a transformative concept that reorients and reenergizes the conversation about racism — and, even more fundamentally, points us toward liberating new ways of thinking about ourselves and each other. Anti-racism is defined as the work of actively opposing discrimination based on race by advocating for changes in political, economic, and social life. Anti-racism tends to be an individualized approach, which is set up to counter an individual's racist behaviors and impact.

- **White Supremacy:** The idea that white people and the ideas, thoughts, beliefs, and actions of white people are superior to people of color and their ideas, thoughts, beliefs, and actions. While most people associate white supremacy with extremist groups like the Ku Klux Klan and neo-Nazis, white supremacy is ever present in our institutional and cultural assumptions that assign value, morality, goodness, and humanity to the white group —while casting people and communities of color as worthless, immoral, bad, inhuman, and undeserving.

- **Intersectionality**, as coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw, is a framework for understanding how different aspects of a person's social and political identities (e.g., gender, race, class, sexuality, ability, physical appearance, etc.) combine to create unique modes of discrimination and privilege. Intersectionality identifies advantages and disadvantages that are felt by people due to this combination of factors.

- **Implicit biases:** Implicit biases are negative associations that people unknowingly hold. They are expressed automatically and without conscious awareness. Many studies have indicated that implicit biases affect individuals' attitudes and actions, thus creating real-world implications, even though individuals may not even be aware that those biases exist within themselves.

This is not a time to add additional responsibilities or offload emotional labor onto your Black staff, particularly Black women who may be experiencing additional caregiving responsibilities at home. Encourage managers to ask their Black team members how they want to be supported and to honor whatever they may need, especially if you don't fully relate to their healing process.

▶ **Create opportunities for all staff to come together as a group.** In addition to holding space for your Black staff to gather, bring your entire staff together to share what they are thinking and feeling, to answer questions or concerns, and to discuss how your organization should evolve to meet the essential demands of this moment. Recognize that every staff member is starting from a different place and that their proximity to and understanding of systemic racism will vary widely. Navigate these complexities by investing in experts and trained facilitators with cautiousness and understanding of these nuances – some of your staff are already consumed by racial injustices while others are only just coming to terms with it. Be prepared to meet each person where they are without tolerating sexist or racist views. Expect to manage and hold space for an array of emotions when you gather. Staff may be sad, angry, anxious, fearful, or a combination of all of these feelings.

Lead the way on anti-racist efforts while learning from your Black colleagues

▶ **Like other key priorities, anti-racism efforts should be led from the top, by the leadership team.** It is incumbent to educate yourselves independently, as this is self-guided work that you must approach before leading your teams *[See Demonstrating Your Leadership, page 18]*. Be humble about what you don't know and reach out for advice. Do the work by [studying](#) how white supremacy, racial violence, and systemic racism have shaped, and continue to shape, American society. These issues are complex and pervasive. Consider how they shape your workplace and the lives of your employees.

▶ **Give voice to Black leadership, colleagues, or employees, but do not lean on them to address these issues; you must own this work.** Involve Black staff in these efforts but don't expect them to do the work. Too often, Black staff and staff of color are called upon to help organizations navigate issues regarding race, only to end up shouldering burdens that are not theirs to carry. It is not right or fair to rely on your Black staff to tackle these issues; you must take the lead yourself.

▶ **If you're only asking for Black staff to weigh in on issues of race, that's an issue.** Give Black staff the option to contribute to your anti-racism work from the expertise of their lived experience and cultural sensitivity, but do not make assumptions about their time, emotional capacity, or interest in contributing. Give them credit, ask for their input, and run decisions by them, but be careful not to tokenize your Black staff.

▶ **Encourage and empower everyone to speak out against racist workplace practices and adopt a zero tolerance policy for this behavior.** Set up systems that enable and empower your employees to come forward if they confront racist, unsafe, or illegal practices at work. These should cover a range of behaviors, from the most egregious acts to microaggressions that deprive your staff of the dignity

they deserve at work. All of your employees, particularly women of color, must feel comfortable shining a light on workplace practices that jeopardize their safety or undermine their dignity.

▶ **Make sure you have a whistleblower policy in place that promotes a culture of transparency and accountability and gives staff a concrete way to share their concerns.** If you already have a whistleblower policy in place, review it and make sure it meets this moment. If not, work with your legal team to enact one that encourages your staff to unearth problems early and protects them from retaliation. Work with experts and facilitators to outline a clear process that facilitates learning, growth, and correction when incidents arise. Continue to check in with your staff about the processes that are created or revised. In a quickly evolving world, processes may need to be reevaluated or refreshed regularly.

Move into action swiftly to examine and dismantle racist and sexist practices embedded in all business functions

▶ **Evaluate the many ways racism shows up in the workplace and how racism harms staff and erodes company culture.** A lack of diverse representation at your organization may indicate racism or sexism within your recruiting and hiring practices. And language used in performance evaluations may reveal internal biases that impact pay and promotions.

▶ **Remove racism from your recruiting, hiring, and talent management processes and increase Black representation across all levels and departments.** If you have paused new hires or are moving more slowly to fill positions, take the time to look for and build a more diverse pool of candidates. And if you are in an industry that is growing and hiring, stay vigilant about protocols that promote the consideration of Black, indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) and women, even when you need to staff up quickly. Below are some practical tips for diversifying your talent pool and advancing your Black staff:

  ▶ **Focus your talent pipeline:** Recruit candidates from historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) and minority-serving institutions (MSIs). When recruiting at predominantly white institutions, seek out organizations that represent Black students and other students of color. Build relationships with networks that represent Black and POC emerging leaders. Work with your local high schools and community college systems.

  ▶ **Commit to diversity internship, fellowships, and secondment programs** and commit a percentage of your internship hires to BIPOC. Consider how to support HBCUs and MSIs outside of recruiting. This could include investing in scholarships or offering financial support to these institutions in other ways.

  ▶ **Overhaul your talent processes to remove racist practices.** Conduct a thorough examination of your interview process, your performance management practices, your compensation structures, and your retention and promotion policies. How are these processes failing your Black staff? What additional mentorship and sponsorship can you offer your talent of color to ensure that they are supported at each stage of their career and have the opportunity to reach their fullest potential within your organization?

▶ **Examine your company policies related to dress code**, including hairstyles and other matters related to appearance to ensure they are not barriers to BIPOC professional and socio-economic advancement. Know that perceptions about what is deemed appropriate are rooted in white supremacy. Learn about how respectability politics has impacted the Black community.

Position the fight to end systemic racism as an ongoing effort that you are committed to in the long run

Becoming an anti-racist organization is not a static achievement; it is life-long work that you and your colleagues must commit to each and every day. Make sure that the goals you set are understood, measurable, and embodied by everyone, and that every member of your team knows what role they play in achieving these goals. Remind everyone that you are building an essential muscle which will grow stronger with effort and time. There is no shortcut to this work; the only way forward is through.

As the author of *So You Want to Talk About Race*, Ijeoma Oluo, says, "You don't need to be free of racism to be an anti-racist. Anti-racism is the commitment to fight racism wherever you find it, including in yourself. And it's the only way forward."

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Caring for Your People

Factor in diversity when making furlough, lay off, and return-to-work decisions

Maybe you were making great progress in diversifying your workforce before these crises or maybe that was a commitment you were just embarking on. Either way, a diverse workforce is critical to your business. As you confront difficult decisions around layoffs, furloughs, or who to bring back to work, you can prioritize diversity by:

- ▶ **Paying attention to the impact** those decisions may have on the diversity of your workforce, and including this factor in your decision-making;
- ▶ **Thinking about who is in the room** when you're making critical decisions; and
- ▶ **Organizing a task force** that includes a cross-section of employees at all levels to advocate for and represent the people you employ.

As you consider who to bring back or lay off, consider how to make your workforce more diverse. Examine "neutral" criteria like tenure as a basis for deciding who to furlough or lay off to make sure it does not have an unintended, disproportionate effect. It is often the case that new hires are disproportionately women or people of color — especially if you were intentionally diversifying your workforce prior to these crises — so using a "neutral" criteria like tenure could unintentionally eradicate your diversity gains.

If you have paused new hires, or are moving more slowly to fill positions, take the time to look for and build a diverse pool of candidates. And if you are in an industry that is growing and hiring, stay vigilant about protocols that promote the consideration of women and people of color, even when you need to staff up quickly.

COVID-19 has forced millions of qualified people — especially communities of color — out of work, so don't assume that an applicant who is unemployed doesn't have what it takes to get the job done. Instead, look at their recent employment history to assess their credentials. With so many qualified job seekers right now, this is an essential consideration when recruiting and hiring.

Implement other cost-cutting measures before laying people off

Before you lay people off, consider reducing executive pay, enacting a hiring freeze, pausing bonuses, and pursuing other cost-cutting measures that could save jobs. This would enable you to retain your diverse workforce and capitalize on their skills, knowledge of your business, and productivity to get through these crises. Or you can

turn to job sharing arrangements that retain employees while lowering costs. If you do enact pay cuts, start with the highest earners and do what you can to avoid reducing pay for your lower-paid employees who likely have fewer financial resources to fall back on. Your staff will appreciate you going the extra mile for them, and will respond in kind.

Reimagine roles in order to retain staff

Major multinational corporations in retail, finance, tech, and telecommunications are taking action on reskilling — not with small pilots, but rather with comprehensive plans to retrain large segments of their workforces. These programs signal that the "future of work" is no longer on the distant horizon.

Even if you are not making those large shifts, your business priorities may still evolve to meet this moment, and you may find that employees' current roles and responsibilities must shift, too. Rather than furlough or lay off your people, you can retain them and reimagine their roles so they match your current business needs by:

- **Training your employees** on new skills and offering them opportunities that you might not otherwise;

- **Stretching more junior employees** and giving them the chance to grow in their roles and showcase different skills; and

- **Analyzing the salary of those remaining** in their jobs and taking on more work, making sure their compensation is still fair and not discriminatory.

As you make these shifts, constantly evaluate how these decisions may disproportionately impact the diversity of your workforce. Is one work unit fully occupied, while another is languishing? Are there individuals who are being left out as work is reallocated?

> *Your people will appreciate you going the extra mile for them, and will respond in kind.*

Rethink the timing of your performance management process

Even in good times, performance reviews can be stressful and anxiety-producing. Recognize the pressures on your staff right now and delay performance reviews if you can.

When you are ready to conduct performance reviews:

- **Consider how the work employees are doing may differ from their "usual" assignments.** Take this into account in your reviews at all levels.

- **Be aware of how this unprecedented work environment may have limited your employees' ability to perform or deliver results** when considering pay increases or promotions. Women, caregivers, and other vulnerable employees can be particularly disadvantaged by unintended consequences or assumptions about their work performance. For example, employees with kids at home may be viewed

as less committed to their work right now, when the reality is that they're spending more hours online than ever before.

▶ **Conduct a pay equity assessment** – and make sure any adjustments in pay do not disadvantage women, people of color, or other employees who are historically underpaid and undervalued.

Keep an eye on diversity when hiring contractors and vendors

Now is the time when your company's purchasing power can help strengthen the diversity of your contractors and vendors. You can show your commitment to diversity by expanding purchasing or investments in small, minority, or women-owned businesses or by prioritizing investments in communities hard-hit by these crises. Consumers, customers, and clients are looking for businesses that are stepping up during this challenging time, so it could give you a competitive advantage.

How to Measure the Pay Gap at Your Company

Ensuring that your people are paid equitably is as important today as ever. When analyzing pay at your company across lines of difference – gender, race, ability, and more – it's important to analyze the median pay, not look simply at "equal pay for equal work."

For a median gender pay gap analysis, for example, you would look at the median pay of women working full time versus men working full time. Median pay is an unadjusted raw measure used by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) to assess not only equal pay but equal opportunity by factoring in how many women serve in high-ranking roles.

Equalizing Your Workplace

Abide by social distancing guidelines – but don't isolate staff

Most companies are resuming operations under new conditions, with social distancing recommendations on site and limitations on the size of gatherings. As you implement these safety measures, make sure that they don't unintentionally roll back your work culture or exclude women, people of color, LGBTQIA+, people with disabilities, older workers, and other vulnerable employees from career advancement. Consider how your actions may have a disproportionate effect on some of your people by:

▶ **Being aware of which employees are moved out of "better" spaces** — further from amenities, less visible to clients, off the senior management floor, or away from key leadership and collaborators, if you must reconfigure your workplace to meet social distancing guidance; and

▶ **Committing to include a diverse group** when you convene people, and making sure women and other vulnerable employees are not unintentionally excluded if meetings or events are limited in size.

Seize opportunities to promote inclusive workspaces

Empty, or nearly empty, workplaces can provide the opportunity to promote diversity and inclusion in the long-run. Take advantage of this moment to make renovations, such as accommodations to enhance accessibility for disabled employees, converting gendered bathrooms into inclusive spaces, designating private spaces for nursing mothers, and displaying signage that is more welcoming and inclusive.

Offer flexible work schedules and working conditions to meet your people's needs

Working from home during this crisis has given many companies direct experience in how their business can still function with staff out of the office. Allowing that arrangement to continue as workplaces reopen can help you retain your employees and make them more productive. If your employees continued to work from home or you leveraged flexible scheduling in recent months, don't abandon these tools. Alternative work arrangements can make it easier for employees to balance the sustained demands of home and work during the COVID-19 pandemic, and can even increase productivity as they are able to focus on completing tasks at a time that works best for them.

Keep in mind that some employees may not feel comfortable coming back to work right away due to health concerns for themselves or their family. Allowing employees to work remotely – if possible – is one way a company can show concern for its workforce, while also avoiding questions about private health information. If possible, consider giving your people the option to return to the office – send out a survey to learn who wants to come back to the office and when, so you can plan ahead in a way that meets your company's and your employees' various needs.

Flexible scheduling allows people who cannot work from home the ability to adjust their schedules, so they can tend to caretaking or other demands at home. Flexible scheduling can work for large and small companies and benefit salaried and hourly workers alike. If you lead a large company, set up systems that allow your staff to select shifts. If you lead a small business, work with your employees to come up with creative ways to adjust their work schedules to meet everyone's needs, such as allowing your team to work with each other to cover shifts. Finally, bear in mind that whatever scheduling system you use, you should provide your employees with notice and predictability in their work schedule – given the demands people are juggling at home, planning around a predictable work schedule is more important than ever.

Supply your teams with the tools they need to work at home effectively

Working from home is not created equal for everyone. Pay attention to any inequities in resources or technology that may make working from home more challenging for some. Perhaps they do not have high speed internet access or have to share one computer in the house with another working partner or children completing school work from home. Because they may not volunteer these challenges on their own, employers should take the initiative to raise these issues up front with the entire workforce and work with employees individually to create tailored solutions.

> *Working from home is **not created equal** for everyone.*

Manage microaggressions in virtual and in-person contexts

When hosting virtual meetings, emailing, messaging, conducting one-to-one check-ins, or engaging with your people in real life, watch out for microaggressions. A microaggression "is a subtle way of showing one's bias and discriminating tendencies. Any statement, joke, or inappropriate inquiry alluding to someone's gender, race, or age can be a sign of a microaggression, especially if it's said in the context of one's weakness." These are the frequent, often overlooked, behaviors that cause so many people, including women, Black workers, and other people of color, to feel excluded at work.

Microaggressions can happen anywhere, and remote work is no exception. In remote meetings, as in in real life, microaggressions can include talking over or cutting off

women, junior level team members, and people of color; not giving time to introverted thinkers; or soliciting input from some team members more than others.

To combat microaggressions, think expansively about who should be invited to virtual meetings and pay attention to who may not be speaking – or who's getting interrupted or talked over during those conversations. You can correct those behaviors in the moment by calling on people who have been ignored or going back to points they raised earlier.

Microaggressions can also take place between individuals, such as inappropriate jokes or comments. Remote communications channels (emails, text, chat) may make it easier for aggressors to take license and harder for leaders to spot, so extra effort may be needed.

You can help root out microaggressions from your workplace by:

- **Educating yourself** about the many ways microaggressions show up in the workplace, acknowledging they exist, and recognizing how they can harm individuals and erode your company culture;
- **Holding conversations** to bring awareness to the issue and create safe spaces where people can share their experiences openly; and
- **Adopting a zero tolerance policy** for this behavior. If you notice microaggressions happening in your workplace, address them immediately.

Acknowledge the added responsibilities that caregivers have at home and co-create custom solutions to support their success

The pandemic has highlighted a struggle that many employees, especially working women, have confronted for years – the "second shift" of unpaid work that awaits them at home, where there may be children, ailing relatives, or older parents who need care and support. The challenges caregivers face are worsening as workplaces open – even as many schools, summer camps, and day care centers remain closed.

Recognize caregivers' additional responsibilities and work with employees to help them balance these competing demands. This can take the form of alternative work arrangements or informal arrangements that allow a worker to go home early or come in late on occasion.

Don't make assumptions about people's availability. For example, you may hold a 6 p.m. meeting online to support employees who remain remote, without considering how that decision prevents parents from preparing their children's dinner on time. Conversely, don't assume that an employee cannot make a late evening meeting because they have children at home. Allow your people to freely express their challenges without fear of disapproval or prejudice, and work with them to co-create custom solutions.

Watch out for workplace harassment and take action when it happens

As employees return to work with higher stress levels, anxieties, fears, and uncertainty, be aware that incidents of sexual harassment, discrimination, and/or bullying could increase. What's more, the fear of retaliation that prevents people from reporting these

incidents, even in good times, is all the more real with unemployment at record highs. As workforces shrink, companies may have fewer people in place to prevent or address workplace harassment, but confronting harassment head-on is as important as ever.

There's also evidence that COVID-19 is putting people at risk in their own homes, with the National Domestic Violence Hotline reporting that about half of all calls they received in April 2020 mentioned abusive and controlling behavior due to the pandemic. Employers can help by providing survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, or stalking with information about emergency resources, access to the employee assistance program (EAP) service, and the ability to use their sick leave as safe days to get the services and assistance they need. Assure employees that if they or someone they know are living in an unsafe or violent home environment, they are not alone. Remind them that there are resources available to them, such as the National Domestic Violence Hotline, which is open 24/7 and is both confidential and free. Seek out those resources yourself, so you can learn how to support a colleague who is being abused by an intimate partner.

INSIGHT

How to Bolster Your Anti-Harassment Policies During Crisis — and Beyond

▸ **Maintain strong reporting systems** through multiple channels to ensure that survivors have clear ways to report sexual harassment, even under virtual or short-staffed conditions, and are protected from retaliation.

▸ **Have a policy that encourages bystanders to speak up** for their fellow employees, without fear of retaliation.

▸ **Address complaints in a timely manner** and investigate them through remote processes, if necessary. Create clear protocols for phone and video interviews and hold frequent status updates with your investigative teams to stay on top of the cases they are handling. Keep complainants informed throughout the process.

▸ **Extend corporate sexual harassment policies to all your people** — including independent contractors and unpaid interns — to ensure that everyone you employ works in an environment free from harassment and discrimination.

▸ **Provide effective sexual harassment training**, tailored to your business, to your entire staff. Make sure it addresses the risks of sexual harassment in remote, virtual, or understaffed working conditions. Consider refreshing or recirculating information about sexual harassment in the context of this moment, with a focus on the additional burdens often experienced by women of color.

Offer permanent paid sick days and paid family and medical leave

The COVID-19 crisis has illustrated the importance of building in paid sick days and paid family and medical leave for all workers as a regular part of your business plan. In this period of tremendous economic difficulty, these policies are critical – and must be made permanent to keep your staff safe and supported over the long term.

Paid leave improves worker retention and increases worker productivity, and companies that implement this policy report that the rewards outweigh the costs. By investing in your workforce, you can retain your trained and committed employees and emerge stronger and ready to move forward as our economy comes back.

Additionally, provide bereavement leave and be flexible about timing. The pandemic has interfered with the ability for families to gather and grieve the loss of loved ones, whether their death was caused by COVID-19 or not. Staff may need time off to grieve a loved one who died months ago, and it's important to allow them time to do so.

INSIGHT

Key Features of Paid Leave Policies to Enact Now — and Keep Permanently

Everyone, at all times, but especially in the midst of this unprecedented public health crisis, needs paid leave, no matter their job or the size of their employer. The features and benefits of paid sick days and paid family and medical leave programs can vary and be molded to your business, but the reasons to take leave should include:

▶ **Paid sick days** should allow your people to take paid time off to visit the doctor, recover from an illness, care for a sick child or family member, or a family member with disability-related needs.

▶ **Paid family and medical leave** should allow your people to take paid time off to care for their own or family member's serious health conditions, for chosen family, newborns or newly adopted or fostered children, or for injured military service members.

In addition, while features will vary, all staff members should qualify for your paid sick days and paid leave programs – including part-time workers. This pandemic has demonstrated how critical paid sick days and paid leave are both for workers and for employers, and for the safety of our community as a whole. Therefore, this may be a time to also consider how you can extend these policies to freelancers and independent contractors who are a critical part of your business.

Demonstrating Your Leadership

Lead with empathy, transparency, and understanding

While stay-at-home orders and shuttered workplaces have been shared experiences during these crises, individuals have faced the effects of the pandemic, the subsequent economic fallout, and state-sanctioned racialized violence in many different ways. Some have been fortunate enough to escape illness and economic devastation, but struggled to homeschool their children and care for elderly parents while keeping up with work. Others have been directly affected by illness or have had loved ones lose jobs and economic stability. Some communities have been hit particularly hard: communities of color are collectively reeling from the disproportionate loss of hours, jobs — and lives due to the pandemic.

On top of this, many are experiencing outrage, pain, and injustice in response to the killings of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, Alton Sterling, Eric Garner, Sandra Bland, Laquan McDonald, and so many others whose names we may never know. Do not overlook how painful these acute experiences are for your staff, especially those whose personal lives have been shaped most significantly by recent events.

Empathetic leadership is especially called for now, and for the foreseeable future. Leaders must recognize that these discrete, but interrelated crises impact each of their employees differently — but significantly. Here are some steps you can take to lead with empathy:

- ▶ **Understand that every employee is grappling with distinct challenges** during this time, rather than make assumptions about what they are going through.

- ▶ **Recognize that the needs of your staff will evolve as these crises evolve** and commit to meeting their needs as best you can.

- ▶ **Be transparent** about the business decisions you must make and why. Take urgent steps toward transparency by publishing workforce diversity data and make concrete commitments that can be measured over time.

- ▶ **Show solidarity** with your people, especially those on the front lines.

- **Acknowledge and seek to understand** the ways employees up and down the wage scale are experiencing these crises.

- **Make mental health support widely available** to all staff, and make sure any employee assistance program (EAP) or other providers your company uses have clinical expertise and training in dealing with a diverse set of clients.

- **Ensure that your managers are informed**, trained, and aware of the issues that the staff they supervise may be facing, and give your managers the support they need to show up for your staff.

- **Look first for opportunities to add Black leadership** to your board of directors and leadership team and know that a lone voice is not enough.

Communicate constantly and transparently about all aspects of your business, including company benefits and policies

At times of great change and uncertainty, strong communication is key. Communicate frequently, utilizing all the modes and channels available to you, and with as much transparency as possible. In the absence of information, employees may not understand the decisions management is making or the scope of their rights and responsibilities.

- **Ensure that your company policies are transparent and easily accessible to all your people** – as well as any adjustments made to meet the demands of this moment. Make it clear in all your communications that employees can take advantage of these programs and resources without fear of repercussion or retaliation.

- **Host company-wide meetings and virtual town halls** to level the information and communication playing field, so all employees return to the office or continue to work remotely on equal footing.

- **When you build these new communication channels, keep the ones that are working permanent** – and expand on them. Being intentional in your ongoing communications is key to building inclusive and equitable workplaces.

Remember that not all staff may come back to the workplace with the same information

If your workforce has been working from home, or some were working while others were laid off, recognize that your employees may come back to the office with different experiences and knowledge about how your business operated during the quarantine period. Those who were not included in remote meetings may not be aware of the discussions and business decisions that were made during them. And casual discussions that help information flow throughout a shared office have not been taking place. Young employees who might

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have been added to a meeting as a boss walked by their desk have missed out on opportunities to listen and learn.

These differences in experiences and information can lead to some people feeling "in the know" when in-person work resumes and others feeling left out. What's worse: some people may be missing key pieces of information they need to succeed in their jobs.

Look out for these disparities in your workplace and increase your communication with everyone in response. If someone is struggling with an assignment, make sure they have the full background. Don't assume that they absorbed the information conveyed in a virtual meeting – it may be that they weren't invited to it in the first place.

Keep diversity and inclusion integral to your economic recovery strategy

Your commitment to diversity and inclusion, and to affinity or Employee Resource Groups (ERGs), has never been more important. Your diversity and inclusion leaders have the expertise and the vision to guide you through these uncertain times, to facilitate important input from your people, and to imagine new and innovative approaches to these new working conditions. At the same time, your diversity and inclusion leaders may be operating short-handed, so think about how to make sure this crucial skill set and knowledge base is maintained.

As you restructure work, consider what opportunities employees might lose out on in these new circumstances. For example, it may be harder for your people to connect over coffee, shadow a colleague, or build rapport with a sponsor or mentor. Social distancing and other pandemic protocols may prevent people from gaining meaningful access to senior leaders and one another. Account for those lost opportunities by

INSIGHT

How to Leverage Your D&I Leaders

When one mass media and entertainment company created a COVID-19 taskforce in response to the crisis, they took extra steps to ensure the group would provide diverse perspectives about their people, programs, and policy.

In addition to inviting senior leaders, they intentionally brought in diversity and inclusion leaders, heads of ERGs, and representatives from all levels. This newly designed task force resulted in greater feelings of inclusion, with employees reporting that they felt their needs were being heard and considered by the executive team.

retaining your diversity roles, ensuring funding for ERGs, diversity programs and initiatives, and protecting diverse talent pipelines.

Set a tone of strong and visible leadership from the top

Setting the tone and culture you want for your business always starts at the top. This is especially true now, when your staff will be looking to you for direction during uncertain times. Model the workplace practices you expect your employees to follow. For example, if you are encouraging people to work from home, make sure you and other leaders across the company are, too. Openly discuss both the business and personal challenges that you are working to overcome. And remember to communicate often about the values that are key to your business, including diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Measure the effects on workforce diversity as you make critical business decisions

As operations resume, companies must continuously track the ways these crises are affecting their staff and measure the impact that critical business decisions are having on the overall diversity of their workforce. Your clients, customers, and investors will want to know this information, as well as prospective employees.

In the immediate term, make sure to track the impact of staffing decisions on your workforce diversity, inclusion, and equity metrics so you can assess how your choices impact your company's make-up. Collecting data in the near term will help you determine if you are falling behind on your workforce diversity goals or staying on track – and enable you to devise a plan to meet or exceed them over the long-term.

The metrics each company keeps tabs on will differ, but you should be sure to measure:

▶ **The demographics of your entire workforce** – as you make reductions or furloughs, promote or consolidate, and as you hire;

▶ **The salaries and total compensation of all your employees**, so you can conduct a gender and racial pay gap analysis; and

▶ **How and to whom you distribute key assignments, opportunities, and workloads** as you reallocate work.

Tracking and strengthening workforce diversity is essential to your long-term success.

Companies that track the impact of these crises on their staff and take steps to improve the economic stability of their employees are likely to see improved productivity and greater customer satisfaction. Tracking and strengthening workforce diversity is essential to your long-term success, so figure out how to measure it now to ensure you have the systems set up for the future.

Now is the time to double down on your values

How you live up to your values now will have future implications on hiring the best talent, attracting discerning customers, and building your business's resilience over the long haul. Before the pandemic, company leaders were already realizing how their workplace culture and values impacted their bottom line, as more and more workers and consumers make decisions on where to work and purchase goods and services based on how businesses live up to their stated values of community and inclusion.

We are seeing this continue amid the pandemic and protests, as the public is paying attention to – and being vocal about – business practices, ranging from the treatment of essential workers to accepting federal small business loan assistance to how organizations treat Black lives. Demonstrating a commitment to your values when times are tough will be noticed and rewarded by consumers who will return more quickly – and with greater loyalty than before.

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Conclusion: Equity, for Resiliency's Sake

TIME'S UP insists upon a world where work is safe, fair, and dignified for all — something that is only possible with the leadership and partnership of you, the business community. Prior to these crises, companies were making historic progress on diversity, equity, and inclusion and publicly committing to serve all stakeholders, not just shareholders. This work must continue with fresh resolve today.

We can no longer ignore the impact of this economic crisis, this health crisis, and this racial inequity crisis on women, particularly women of color and women in low-wage jobs:

- ▶ **COVID-19 has disproportionately impacted Black and Latinx communities,** where deaths are disproportionately high because the health care and support they've needed all along have been underfunded and ignored.

- ▶ **Between February and June 2020, one in six Black women have lost their jobs.** That's in part because Black women are overrepresented in the low-wage service industry jobs that have been lost. For those who are still working, they are overwhelmingly in frontline jobs risking their lives, and often for minimum wage.

- ▶ **Black women are also bearing the burden at home.** Those who are fortunate enough to work are balancing school, child care, and caring for elderly or sick relatives. And the jobs that have come back are not going to Black and brown women.

At TIME'S UP Foundation, our focus has always been on combating sexual harassment and building safe, fair, and dignified workplaces for everyone. However, the patriarchal system from which sexual harassment flows is intimately bound up in the racism and racial hierarchy that has governed the United States for centuries. And you can't solve the problem of sexual harassment without an anti-racist approach to this work.

The recommendations covered in this second edition of the guide are intended to offer initial guidance in the short term. Fostering and maintaining an anti-racist, anti-sexist workplace culture will take a sustained effort over time, but it's worth the time and investment. Because if our entire workforce is stronger, then our businesses and the entire economy will be more competitive, more resilient, and more prosperous in the long run.

We welcome all business leaders to join our community as we spearhead innovations in how we work – and develop a more inclusive, just, and resilient system for the future. Learn more by visiting us at timesupfoundation.org, and please contact us with your feedback.

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