Global Diversity Awareness Month
Programming Guide

The Diversity Movement

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Global Diversity Awareness Month celebrates the values, contributions, and diversity of cultures around the world. By elevating diverse voices, you highlight the unique perspectives each individual brings to the table. Now, each October, many organizations choose to observe and celebrate Global Diversity Awareness Month by highlighting, honoring, and learning more about diverse customs, cultures, and experiences. By doing so, we gain a greater awareness of and appreciation for the unique backgrounds and identities of others and can better leverage diverse perspectives for greater innovation, problem-solving, productivity, and collaboration.

As you start to design your Global Diversity Awareness Month programming, it's important to consider the many different ethnicities, cultures, heritages, and experiences that weave together to form each individual's unique tapestry. Each of us is a singular mix of intersectional and overlapping identities which contribute to our full sense of self.

Also remember that October should not be the only month in which you celebrate diversity. Instead, it's helpful to think of this month as a kick-off or a high note in your yearly schedule of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) programming. If you are not already prioritizing DEI at your organization, it's important to realize that these programs may appear insincere or performative without a deeper organizational commitment. If that's the case, Global Diversity Awareness Month offers the chance to take solid, foundational steps toward greater DEI at large, which we recommend you communicate and begin before launching a full month of diversity programming.

What are the first steps in creating a celebration that authentically represents my organization?

Start by collecting qualitative and quantitative data to measure the current state of DEI at your organization. These baseline metrics will help you see your organization objectively so that you can create an authentic celebration and begin to think about potential future goals. Consider a survey that asks employees to voluntarily contribute their demographic data (race, gender, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, disability, neurodiversity, age, tenure, family structure, socioeconomic background, and more). Include questions that help to gauge feelings of belonging and inclusion, like “do you feel that your voice is heard and valued?” and “do you feel welcome, respected, and empowered to grow?” And remember to explain why you are collecting this data: so you can better understand and celebrate the unique diversity of your organization.

Then, have fun with it! Food, art, music, and games are a huge part of every culture. Encourage your team to share what’s most meaningful to them. Perhaps, create a multicultural movie list or playlist of songs for employees to enjoy throughout the month. Or, ask your team to contribute their favorite recipes and create your own organization-wide digital cookbook. If your employee population speaks many languages, learn the word for “diversity” in all of them.

Global Diversity Awareness Month is a wonderful opportunity to seek out and promote diversity of thought and experience within our workplaces and communities. Below are some ideas and examples for how to create an authentic celebration of diversity at your organization.

Communicate

Internally

Include a commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion in your mission, vision, or values. Highlight diverse stories from your organization, local community, or industry in team meetings, employee newsletters, or internal Slack channels. Learn best practices for inclusive language to be sure these communications are respectful of all identities. Stimulate conversation around diversity by asking your team who they might like to honor as part of your Global Diversity Awareness Month festivities.

Externally

Amplify diverse identities, stories, and cultures on your social media, publications, and external newsletters. For instance, you may choose to highlight history-making local community members or professionals in your industry who are part of marginalized or underrepresented groups. Emphasize what you are already doing to increase diversity and inclusion in your organization, even if you are only starting out on that journey. Encourage people within your organization to share their personal stories of diversity. Always be sure these posts are voluntary and that all participants feel encouraged to speak authentically.

NOTES & IDEAS

Educate

Learn More About Unconscious Bias

Embracing diversity isn't always easy, especially when our brains can so easily get in the way. Everyone has unconscious biases -- even people who have the best intentions to celebrate and embrace diversity. The key is understanding how to identify them and mitigate their effects. To learn more, consider offering a voluntary, organization-wide unconscious bias course or share online articles and videos that explain what bias is and what it does, like Anurag Gupta's TED Talk on the subject.

Consider a Virtual Workshop

Take the initiative to understand other cultures and perspectives by engaging with external speakers who have diverse identities. You may consider a virtual privilege walk, a workshop about inclusive language, or dig deeper into specific experiences by hiring speakers from different communities to share their personal story. By intentionally seeking multicultural perspectives, we create more deeply-felt, memorable, lived experiences of working alongside people who aren't like us.

NOTES & IDEAS

Read, Watch, Listen, and LEARN

As mentioned earlier, a multicultural movie list, playlist of songs, or digital cookbook is a great way to start in celebrating the unique diversity of your organization. Below, you'll also find a short list of resources that may be helpful in broadening your perspective on the value and dimensions of diversity.

BOOKS

Culture Crossing by Michael Landers

We Can't Talk About That At Work by Mary Frances Winters

Demystifying Diversity by Jiten Patel & Gamiel Yafai

Lead Like An Ally by Julie Kratz

Same, Same but Different by Jenny Sue Kostecki-Shaw

The Inclusive Language Handbook by Jackie Ferguson and Roxanne Bellamy

MOVIES

Out of One, Many

My Love: Six Stories of True Love

Life In A Day

What Was Ours

Samsara

PODCASTS

Modern Immigrant

Code Switch

Immigrantly

Diversity: Beyond the Checkbox

The Deep Dive

Unlocking Us

WEBSITES

Colors in Cultures

ViewChange.org

World Factbook

Serve/Donate

Create volunteer opportunities

Use Volunteer Match to find virtual and in-person volunteer opportunities, or ask your employees which local nonprofits they would like your organization to support. Allow employees to take paid time off for volunteer hours, or consider creating an organization-wide Day of Service. Most metropolitan areas have volunteership programs that connect interested volunteers with opportunities for community service in city departments and city-funded agencies. To find specific opportunities within your city, try Idealist or Engage.

Donate money

Sometimes, money is the most meaningful contribution you can give to make a difference. Use Charity Navigator or Volunteer Match to find vetted options that align with your company values, or ask your employees to nominate causes and specific nonprofit organizations where they would like to make an impact. For example, you may consider creating a regular annual donation to the National Diversity Council, National Urban League, Southern Poverty Law Center, or Inclusive America.

NOTES & IDEAS

Invest

Understand Where You Are

Take the time to understand your organization's existing diversity. Obtaining baseline data about your employee demographics will help you see your strengths and needs more objectively, so you can celebrate where you are successful in embracing diversity and where you may need to focus on improvement. Collect quantitative demographic data plus qualitative data about whether employees feel included and respected at work. Once you know where you are starting from, it's easier to understand where you want to go.

Support Diverse Professionals

Consider engaging or partnering with diversity-focused trade and professional associations that provide support for traditionally underrepresented groups. For instance, if you are in healthcare, you may consider a relationship with the American Muslim Health Professionals or the Association of Black Cardiologists. If you are in engineering, consider the Association for Women in Science or the American Society of Engineers of Indian Origin. To make a deeper local impact, you might also think of creating a paid internship or annual scholarship for one or more students from your local Historically Black College or University (HBCU).

Start to Increase Your Supplier Diversity

Investigate how you can make a positive impact and deepen your relationship with diverse people in your local community or within your industry. Kickstart an effort toward greater supplier diversity by re-examining which companies and people you partner with for your foundational business services, like legal services, insurance, pest control, office supplies, catered lunches, or accounting and payroll. Seek to make an intentional impact both socially and economically.

NOTES & IDEAS

Collaborate

Ask and Listen

You may have heard it said already that inclusion unlocks the power of diversity. To reap the benefits of a diverse population -- and promote more diverse thinking -- organizations should seek to cultivate a culture of belonging in which each person feels respected, included, and encouraged to participate. One of the best ways to foster inclusion is by seeking out and listening to the perspectives and opinions of the people you are trying to include. As you build your Global Diversity Awareness Month programs, ask your employees if and how they would like their cultures and identities included.

Create a Mentorship Program

Mentorship is one of the most effective diversity initiatives, helping new employees get up to speed faster and feel an immediate sense of welcome and belonging that improves retention and workplace satisfaction, especially for people from marginalized groups. Remember, mentors do not necessarily have to come from within your organization. Consider partnering with other organizations and people you admire to support your employees from diverse backgrounds.

Energize Your Efforts

Look for simple opportunities that increase exposure to diverse cultures and identities. For instance, you may think of offering a virtual, multicultural baking class, or a virtual guided tour of a cultural institution, like the National Museum of Anthropology in Mexico City or the Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage in Washington, DC.

NOTES & IDEAS

Conclusion

Global Diversity Awareness Month draws attention to the great diversity of human identities, perspectives, and experiences that surround us every day. At an organizational level, highlighting diversity encourages us to celebrate the strength in our differences and to look outside our own perspective to see the world differently. By investing time and energy in celebrating diversity, your organization shows current employees, potential hires, customers, clients, partners, and all stakeholders that you value a broad range of identities, cultures, backgrounds, and perspectives.

About The Diversity Movement

The Diversity Movement offers a suite of employee experience applications that personalizes diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) for your organization and delivers real world business outcomes. Our team of experts provides a customized mix of online learning, tools, events, and consulting services that help our partners create future focused, employee-centered cultures. Learn more at thediversitymovement.com.

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