Diversity & Inclusion

Language

Words at Work: Building inclusion through the power of language

Words matter. The way we speak to each other can foster an atmosphere in which everyone feels like they are part of the team. Inclusive language enables everyone in our organization to feel valued and respected.

Busting the myths

01

“This is just a bunch of PC talk!”
Inclusive language is not about being “politically correct” — it is about using language that is respectful, accurate and relevant to everyone. Inclusive language at work is a tool that organizations can use to respond to shifts and deliver better business outcomes.

02

“Everyone is so sensitive!”
It can be difficult to empathize and understand why others feel excluded by particular words and phrases. Inclusive language is not about coddling people. It’s about changing the idea that alienating people through language is acceptable in the first place.

03

“There are bigger things to worry about.”
Changing our language is one way that we can create productive workplace cultures that are inclusive of everyone. Our words reflect our workplace culture, and inclusive cultures drive business performance and employee well-being. Unconscious bias may be expressed through language. However, by changing our language we can start to dismantle these biases.
5 tips for using inclusive language

01 Have an open mind.
Be open to learning about language that may unintentionally make someone feel disrespected, then be open to change.

02 Focus on individuals first.
Don't immediately focus on the demographic or group someone belongs to. Don't stereotype people from certain groups, even if you believe the stereotype is positive.

03 Pay attention to context.
Language that may be considered acceptable outside of work could be non-inclusive in a professional setting. For example; even in a group of all men, or all women, the use of the “guys” or “ladies” could be felt as exclusionary.

04 If you are unsure, ASK.
If you are unsure what terminology someone prefers, ask them. It is essential to seek out information when the situation is unclear.

05 Stay calm and acknowledge.
If someone calls you out, be mindful of your response and acknowledge their emotions. “I apologize. I didn’t mean to offend you. Could you help me understand why what I said was wrong?” is an example of a thoughtful response that could lead to deeper understanding.

Click here to read the full article.