HOW AND WHY
TO CREATE AN EMPOWERING WORKPLACE
WHERE EMPLOYEES HAVE THE AUTONOMY, RESOURCES, AND SUPPORT THEY NEED TO SUCCEED.¹

TALK TO ME

WHAT EMPLOYEES SAY
Encourage me and your other direct reports and colleagues to have open discussions of our unique experiences.³

TAKE ACTION
• Inquire across differences: Explore the experiences of others through genuine curiosity.
• Suspend judgment: Actively refrain from adding your own editorial comments or lens to someone else’s experiences.
• Demonstrate vulnerability and self-disclose: Acknowledge your shortcomings and share elements of your experience that may feel uncomfortable or risky.

TRUST ME

WHAT EMPLOYEES SAY
Trust me to do my work. Give me the autonomy to do my work where and when works best for me.⁴ Be confident in my ability to achieve results.

TAKE ACTION
• Recognize the talents of employees and create opportunities for ongoing development.
• Ensure flexible working arrangements are equally available and accessible to all employees.⁶
• Do not penalize employees who use flexible working arrangements or treat them differently than those who choose not to use them.⁶

STAND BY ME

WHAT EMPLOYEES SAY
When issues occur, back me up and give me air cover.⁷ Focus on solutions rather than blame.

TAKE ACTION
• Treat missteps and challenges as learning moments.
• Assume positive intent.
• Approach difficulties with a growth mindset, helping employees to develop and improve.

EQUIP ME

WHAT EMPLOYEES SAY
Enable me to do my job to the best of my ability. Provide me with the tools and support I need to thrive.

TAKE ACTION
• Make sure employees have sufficient access to the information and resources necessary to do their job well.⁸
• Ensure employees are kept in the know about all issues that are critical to their job performance.
WHY

BLACK, EAST ASIAN, AND SOUTH ASIAN PROFESSIONALS IN CANADA

86% Of those highly on guard to bias aspire to leadership positions at work.

82% Of those highly on guard to bias want to remain in the same company.

39% Report being highly on guard to protect against racial and ethnic bias.

ASIAN, BLACK, LATINX, AND MULTIRACIAL PROFESSIONALS IN THE UNITED STATES

89% Of those highly on guard to bias aspire to leadership positions at work.

91% Of those highly on guard to bias want to remain in the same company.

41% Report being highly on guard to protect against racial and ethnic bias.

Of those highly on guard to bias aspire to leadership positions at work.

Of those highly on guard to bias want to remain in the same company.

REPORT BEING HIGHLY ON GUARD TO PROTECT AGAINST RACIAL AND ETHNIC BIAS.

Who experience high levels of Emotional Tax are thinking about quitting their jobs.

68% BLACK
59% EAST ASIAN
53% SOUTH ASIAN

29% ASIAN
37% BLACK
43% LATINX

FEEL MORE EMPOWERED
FEEL MORE VALUED FOR UNIQUENESS
ARE LESS ON GUARD TO BIAS
HAVE LESS INTENT TO QUIT

AN EMPOWERING WORKPLACE CAN COMBAT EMOTIONAL TAX AND ATTRITION

EMOTIONAL TAX

The combination of feeling different from peers at work because of gender, race, and/or ethnicity, being on guard to experiences of bias, and the associated effects on health, well-being, and ability to thrive at work.

Jennifer Thorpe-Moscon, Alixandra Pollack, and Olufemi Olu-Lafe, Empowering Workplaces Combat Emotional Tax for People of Colour in Canada (Catalyst, 2019);

Dnika J. Travis and Jennifer Thorpe-Moscon, Day-to-Day Experiences of Emotional Tax Among Women and Men of Color in the Workplace (Catalyst, 2018); Jeanine Prime and Elizabeth R. Salib, Inclusive Leadership: The View From Six Countries (Catalyst, 2014).

Catalyst, Engaging in Conversations About Gender, Race, and Ethnicity in the Workplace (2016).


Anna Beninger and Nancy M. Carter, The Great Debate: Flexibility vs. Face Time—Busting the Myths Behind Flexible Work Arrangements (Catalyst, 2013)


Anna Beninger, Managing Flex 2: Successfully Managing Employees Working Flexibly (Catalyst, 2014).


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