Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada

Innovation, Sciences et Développement économique Canada

Canada

The 50 – 30 Challenge

What Works Toolkit: Starting the Conversation

Alignment with the Publicly Available Specification (PAS)

It is important to note that terminology is ever evolving and may not be reflected in external links and resources throughout the What Works Toolkit. The terms used within the toolkit align with the Publicly Available Specification (PAS) document developed by the Diversity Institute, and sponsored by the Standards Council of Canada in support of the Government of Canada's 50 – 30 Challenge. Section 3.1 in the PAS defines Equity-Deserving Groups as follows:

3.1 Equity-Deserving Groups

The Challenge's equity-deserving groups include those identifying as: Racialized, Black, and/or People of Colour ("Visible Minorities"), People with disabilities (including invisible and episodic disabilities), 2SLGBTQ+ and/or gender and sexually diverse individuals, and "Aboriginal" and/or Indigenous Peoples. The program and participants recognize First Nation Peoples, Métis Nation, and Inuit as founding Peoples of Canada and under-represented in positions of economic influence and leadership.

Please refer to the PAS for additional information on the 50 – 30 Challenge as well as tools and resources for your organization.

Purpose of this Tool (1 of 2)

For "Starting the Conversation" to be successful, it is important for organizations to have mechanisms in place leading up to and after the conversation.

The purpose of this tool is to:

- Help guide leaders in organizations to feel confident about approaching and initiating conversations that are normally stigmatized.

- Provide leaders with a framework for understanding where, when and how to start the conversation.

- Demonstrate what "Starting the Conversation" means and why it is such a crucial milestone along an organization's equity, diversity and inclusion journey.

Purpose of this Tool (2 of 2)

How is this Relevant to the 50 – 30 Challenge?

✓ The 50 – 30 Challenge emphasizes consideration for the nuanced needs of, and barriers faced by, women and/or non-binary people, Racialized, Black, and/or People of Colour, People with disabilities (including invisible and episodic disabilities), 2SLGBTQ+ and/or gender and sexually diverse individuals, and "Aboriginal" and/or Indigenous Peoples. Additionally, employees with intersectional identities are met with multiple layers of adversity and systemic barriers within organizations.

✓ "Starting the Conversation" is an important step in the right direction to build workplaces where employees that belong to equity-deserving groups can envision themselves in positions of influence and leadership on corporate boards and in senior management.

✓ Initiating conversations related to equity, diversity and inclusion takes courage. It helps create welcoming environments, and bolsters the 50 – 30 Challenge's goal to increase representation and inclusion of diverse groups within leadership positions at the workplace.

Starting the Conversation

"Starting the Conversation" is more than the act of initiating a dialogue with your employees.

For "Starting the Conversation" to be successful, it is important for organizations to have mechanisms in place leading up to, and after, the conversation.

- Before the organization attempts a conversation with employees, it must make a commitment to equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) and make it an important part of its entire business strategy.

- Individuals have a role to play in not only understanding unconscious bias, but also in identifying the respective power and privilege they have within race, class, gender, religion, and ability.

- Part of the commitment to EDI must be to **educate yourself** about the challenges faced by equity-deserving employees in the workplace:

  - Respect the diversity within each identity group.

  - Understand that there are nuanced experiences with employees that hold intersectional identities.

[Jump ahead within this tool](#) to understand the importance of starting the conversation.
[Jump ahead within this tool](#) to learn what it means to start the conversation.

Key Takeaways for All Organizations (2 of 3)

Actioning the Conversation

- Conduct a listening tour and consider collecting self-identification data so that your organization can tailor solutions to address barriers that employees at your workplace are facing.

- Co-create solutions by working with employees from identified priority groups to ensure EDI commitments are tangible and resonate.

- Foster confidence throughout the organization through ongoing formal training and setting up forums and safe spaces to have open and honest discussions.

- Know where your organization stands, be honest about your expertise and bring in external consultants, community leaders, and trainers to facilitate conversations.

Jump ahead within this tool to learn how to start the conversation.

Jump ahead within this tool to learn what the right questions may be to ask.

Key Takeaways for All Organizations (3 of 3)

Continuing the Conversation

- Continue to reflect on your privilege and understand the power dynamics in your organization and your position to make a positive impact on others as well as the organization as a whole.

- Continue to actively listen to your employees. Create channels to receive feedback in order to ensure your EDI commitments lead to maximum impact and minimal harm.

- Lean into being uncomfortable – learn from your mistakes.

- Repeat the process and be open to iterations, keep educating yourself and others, take courageous actions to challenge systemic barriers, and demonstrate humility and care throughout.

Jump ahead within this tool to learn when and where you should start the conversation.

Scenario: Meet Pearl

Pearl is a manager at a local art gallery. She believes that art can connect people together, and sees this being exhibited through the gallery which has started to attract more and more diverse talent.

Recently, Pearl heard rumours that many employees, especially those identifying with priority groups, do not feel supported at work and that their unique needs are not being met. Pearl wants to make a change, but is at a loss for where and how to start discussions on making a change.

Pearl comes to the Starting the Conversation tool for help.

The A, B, and C's of Starting the Conversation

Why	**1.0 Introduction** **2.0 Why Start the Conversation?** • Highlighting the significance of starting the conversation
What	**3.0 What is Starting the Conversation?** • The Four A's of "Starting the Conversation": Elements of the tool to showcase what "Starting the Conversation" looks like – Awareness, Action, Accountability, and Again
How	**4.0 How Do You Start the Conversation?** • The Four B's of "Starting the Conversation": The suggested approach to initiate dialogue in your organization – Boundary setting, Building your knowledge base, Bolstering confidence, and Being honest
Where and When	**5.0 Where and When Should You Start?** • The Six C's of "Starting the Conversation": A roadmap of where and when to have the conversation Commitment, Communication, Conversation, Co-creation, Continuous Feedback and Caring
Who	**6.0 Who Needs to Start the Conversation?** • Important considerations to make when determining who is responsible for having the conversation **6.1 Asking the Right Questions**

1.0 Introduction

When it comes to creating diverse, equitable and inclusive workplaces, some leaders don't know where, when, and how to start the conversation.

Many of you are somewhere along the journey toward cultivating a sense of belonging for all employees; some of you are far along and ahead of the crowd, while others are just embarking on it.

Having the conversation is a crucial element of leadership. Many leaders hesitate because they don't know where to begin or how to bring up subjects that they are not experts in.

It is important to approach starting the conversation with humility and an understanding that simply breaking the ice is not enough. You must continue to educate yourself and others, and commit to ongoing dialogue on the importance and impact of equity, diversity and inclusion in the workplace.

2.0 Why Start the Conversation? (1 of 4)

Starting the conversation is what allows organizations to create welcoming and safe spaces for equity-deserving individuals in organizations – so why is this important for your success?

- ✓ Organizational longevity is dependent on employee satisfaction.

- ✓ Increased employee satisfaction and engagement fosters greater loyalty, retention, productivity, and overall performance.

- ✓ Stakeholders such as customers and investors are increasingly aligning their decisions with social values like employee well-being.

- ✓ Diverse, lived, and professional experiences lead to smarter, more intentional, and higher quality organizational decision-making.

Safe Space is defined as: "A place intended to be free of bias, conflict, criticism, or potentially threatening actions, ideas, or conversations" – Source: Merriam-Webster. Safe spaces allow individuals to feel comfortable having brave and honest conversations.

2.0 Why Start the Conversation? (2 of 4)

Black Employees	Women
According to the Center for Talent Innovation's study, Black men are two-and-a-half times more likely to be satisfied with their job and intend to stay if the company has moderated forums to discuss race.	As women move into leadership roles, their day-to-day experiences often get more difficult. They are also more likely to face microaggressions that challenge their competence, such as being interrupted, hearing comments on their emotional state, or having their judgment questioned.

2.0 Why Start the Conversation? (3 of 4)

"Aboriginal" and/or Indigenous Employees	Employees with Disabilities
The Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action #92 point 3 calls businesses to provide education for management and staff on the history of Aboriginal peoples, including the history and legacy of residential schools, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Treaties and Aboriginal rights, Indigenous law, and Aboriginal–Crown relations. This requires skills-based training in intercultural competency, conflict resolution, human rights, and anti-racism.	When employees with disabilities have role models at the leadership level who have disclosed their own disabilities, they are 15% more likely to have higher career aspirations than their peers in other organizations. With this factor in place, employees are 26% more likely to be open about their disability.

2.0 Why Start the Conversation? (4 of 4)

2SLGBTQ+ and/or Gender and Sexually Diverse Employees	Employees of Colour
Biphobia, homophobia and transphobia still exist in the workplace and remain under-represented in diversity and inclusion conversations. Only 59% of organizations communicate strong leadership messages on the importance of including 2SLGBTQ2+ and/or gender and sexually diverse employees in the workplace.	Among professional Canadians of Colour who are highly "on guard" at work (anticipating and consciously preparing for potential bias or discrimination), 50% to 69% have a high intent to leave their jobs.

3.0 What is Starting the Conversation? The Four A's

Starting the conversation is a series of 4 critical steps that promote and foster equity and belonging amongst priority employee groups.

Awareness	Know the data, conduct self-identification surveys, understand employee challenges, needs and barriers to success, and learn about leading practice.
Action	Conduct a listening tour that includes 1-on-1 coffee chats with employees and/or focus group sessions. Ask intentional questions, be open to criticism, and provide multiple mediums for discussion such as in-person conversations as well as anonymous channels for communication.
Accountability	Review the collected data, promote transparency in sharing the current state results, ensure accountability by sharing the desired future state, ask employees to hold each other and leaders accountable, and set goals and metrics.
Again	Repeat the process and be open to iterations. Keep educating yourself and others, take courageous actions to challenge systemic barriers, and demonstrate humility throughout.

4.0 How Do You Start the Conversation? The Four B's (1 of 4)

1. Boundary Setting

Boundary setting is critical to ensuring that important voices are being heard and that individuals feel comfortable to share their stories.

Boundary setting signals to employees that organizations care about their employees' well-being throughout the process of EDI.

What does this look like?

Before conversations begin, set up clearly defined ground rules, including:

- A culture of respect for all participants and their place on the learning journey

- Space to speak and be heard without interruption

- **Anonymity:** Individual identities and details of the conversation that may reveal the identity of participants must remain anonymous (unless there is reason to believe that an individual's personal safety may be at risk)

This infographic by Catalyst offers fundamental ground rules on facilitating conversations with colleagues, teams, and larger groups.

Review this guide to learn more about the rights of LGBTQ2+ employees, developed by Pride at Work Canada.

4.0 How Do You Start the Conversation? The Four B's (2 of 4)

2. Building Your Knowledge Base

Leveraging existing equity work, resources, and current and relevant information to continuously strengthen individual leaders' and the organization's knowledge basis.

What does this look like?

For conversations to be impactful and to avoid having employees from priority groups carry the burden of educating their colleagues, take it upon yourself to:

- Better understand the needs and barriers of different groups

- Ask respectful questions and be prepared to make mistakes

- Don't put the onus on the underrepresented individuals to lead the conversation and serve as the 'ultimate authority'

L.E.A.D: Listen, Engage, Acknowledge and Do: This framework by Deloitte explains how organizations can take action against anti-Black racism.

Learn more about the Indigenous People in Canada through The University of Alberta's free course, "Indigenous Canada".

4.0 How Do You Start the Conversation? The Four B's (3 of 4)

3. Bolstering Confidence

Frequent learning and sharing opportunities allow employees to show up authentically, strengthen their connections, and bolster their confidence and sense of belonging.

What does this look like?

To foster collaboration and confidence throughout organizations, ongoing training that brings employees along a knowledge journey should be provided through multiple channels. These can include:

- Formal training on anti-racism and anti-oppression via in-person workshops or e-learning modules

- Informal lunch-and-learns to build comfort with uncomfortable topics and conversations

- Ongoing individual awareness and unconscious bias training

Review this conversation to learn more about disability-inclusive language, presented by the Rick Hansen Foundation.

Learn more about the equity, diversity and inclusion training curriculum and online courses offered by The Canadian Congress on Inclusive Diversity and Workplace Equity.

4. Being Honest

Organizations should be transparent and honest throughout their EDI journey to showcase a genuine willingness to confront the current state of their organizational dynamics.

What does this look like?

Looking to experts within the community to support, enhance, and educate is critical to ensuring that EDI commitments remain tangible and aligned with current social expectations and movements.

- Acknowledge your privilege as a leader

- Understand where your expertise lies

- Understand where your organization stands

- Bring in external consultants, community leaders, and trainers to facilitate conversations. Along with providing strong insights and impactful training, this will also help remove any internal political or power dynamics between employees

> This six-module course entitled "The Comfortable Race Conversation Process" explores anti-racism, equity, diversity, and inclusion conversations with peer learners.

> **Privilege** is defined as: "The unfair and unearned advantages individuals are granted for having, or being perceived to have, social identities that align with those deemed to be superior according to societal rules and norms. It is often experienced as an absence of barriers related to a particular social identity (e.g., White privilege, straight privilege)."
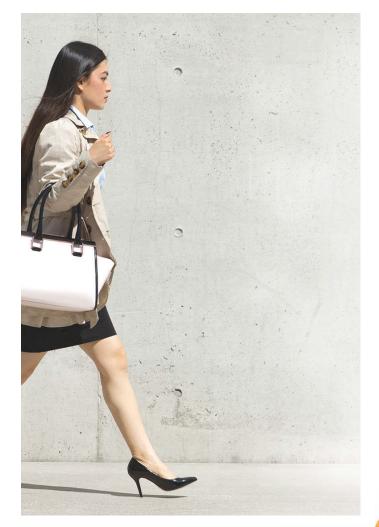> – Source: Egale

Scenario: Checkpoint 1

Pearl recognizes that like herself, each of her employees have unique intersectional identities. While Pearl can speak to her Asian-Canadian heritage, she cannot speak to the experiences and needs of other priority group-identifying employees. Pearl wants to create a forum for people to contribute their ideas.

Pearl has a few thoughts on how to do so, but needs to decide the best way to implement them. What order should she implement these initiatives in?

❑ Host one-on-one individual conversations with each of her employees to understand how she can support them

❑ Host group discussions with all of her staff as an open forum for them to share

❑ Implement an anonymous channel for employees to submit their feedback

Scenario: Checkpoint 1 (Solution)

Pearl recognizes that like herself, each of her employees have unique intersectional identities. While Pearl can speak to her Asian-Canadian heritage, she cannot speak to the experiences and needs of other priority group-identifying employees. Pearl wants to create a forum for people to contribute their ideas.

Pearl has a few thoughts on how to do so, but needs to decide the best way to implement them. What order should she implement these initiatives in?

1. Implement an anonymous channel for employees to submit their feedback (Boundary Setting)
2. Host one-on-one individual conversations with each of her employees to understand how she can support them (Building Your Knowledge Base)
3. Host group discussions with all of her staff as an open forum for them to share (Bolstering Confidence)

5.0 When and Where Should You Start? The Six C's

For "Starting the Conversation" to be impactful, it is critical that organizations create mechanisms leading up to and after the conversation to ensure its success.

Stage	1. Commitment	2. Communication	3. Conversation	4. Co-Creation	5. Continuous Feedback
Definition	Make a commitment to courageous EDI goals that will transform your organization and are embedded in your business strategy.	Share your commitments with your employees, customers, and other stakeholders to encourage transparency and build trust.	Start the conversation to create a welcoming and safe atmosphere for employees.	Work with employees from identified priority groups to ensure EDI commitments are tangible and resonate.	Create a structure to receive continuous feedback to ensure your EDI commitments lead to maximum impact and minimal harm.
What Does This Look Like?	Set your EDI goals and map them against your 5- to 10-year business strategies with clearly defined metrics for success.	Showcase these goals through varying channels such as employee newsletters, company intranet site, external website, and social media platforms.	Refer to the Four B's of How to Start the Conversation (Return to "4.0 How Do You Start the Conversation?").	Co-create solutions with established Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) such as the Black Professionals Network and existing Employee Equity and Diversity Councils.	An anonymous employee feedback survey and regular touchpoints with employees through focus groups and in-person dialogue.

6. Caring – Each component of this journey requires intention, care, and humility.

Scenario: Checkpoint 2

Pearl reflects on what she read from "Where and When Should You Start?" and thinks about current activities the art gallery does to promote EDI. Currently, the art gallery has a section on its website to discuss its commitment to supporting local, diverse artists and promotes local artists as well. However, the art gallery does not have any formalized EDI efforts in place.

What steps could Pearl take? Select all that apply.
- ❑ No additional actions are required, the art gallery is already communicating their commitment to EDI
- ❑ Release a museum newsletter to discuss the gallery's EDI initiatives and communicate it with staff and the community
- ❑ Attend community organization events to learn more from various priority groups and invite employees to join the conversation if they would like
- ❑ Create an action plan with concrete steps the gallery will take to promote EDI

Scenario: Checkpoint 2 (Solution)

Pearl reflects on what she read from "Where and When Should You Start?" and thinks about current activities the art gallery does to promote EDI. Currently, the art gallery has a section on its website to discuss its commitment to supporting local, diverse artists and promotes local artists as well. However, the art gallery does not have any formalized EDI efforts in place.

What steps could Pearl take? Select all that apply.
❏ Incorrect: No additional actions are required, the art gallery is already communicating their commitment to EDI
❏ Correct: Release a museum newsletter to discuss the gallery's EDI initiatives and communicate it with staff and the community
❏ Correct: Attend community organization events to learn more from various priority groups and invite employees to join the conversation if they would like
❏ Correct: Create an action plan with concrete steps the gallery will take to promote EDI

6.0 Who Needs to Start the Conversation? (1 of 3)

It is the responsibility of all employees in an organization to ensure creating and sustaining a sense of belonging for everyone, however, there is a greater responsibility for the leaders in an organization to create spaces where others feel welcome through the provision of learning opportunities as well as their own behaviours and actions as individuals.

Asking the Right Questions:

- What are some systemic barriers to success?

- How can leaders consider emotional tax? What can organizations do to alleviate the stress of emotional tax?

- Is there psychological safety present for employees? Do they feel that they can contribute and that they are heard?

- How can leaders amplify diverse voices? Which voices are missing and being excluded from important conversations?

Emotional Tax is defined as: "The combination of feeling different from peers at work because of gender, race, and/or ethnicity, being on guard against experiences of bias, and experiencing the associated effects on health, well-being, and ability to thrive at work" – Source: Catalyst

Psychological Safety is defined as: "An environment that encourages, recognizes and rewards individuals for their contributions and ideas by making individuals feel safe when taking interpersonal risks. A lack of psychological safety at work can inhibit team learning and lead to in-groups, groupthink and blind spots" - Source: Gartner

6.0 Who Needs to Start the Conversation? (2 of 3)

Important Considerations:

- Be mindful of the varying overlapping intersections that exist within priority groups. This is critical to ensuring that conversations remain safe for employees

- There is no standardized approach. We strongly recommend you assess each scenario on its own to ensure you approach every conversation and colleague with care

- Avoid singling people out

- Avoid making assumptions

- Unless they initiate or voluntarily do so, avoid burdening colleagues with the responsibility to educate you and others

- Avoid tokenizing to carry on the conversation

Tokenism is defined as: "Performative policies that ostensibly promote diversity or equality (placing women or diverse groups in leadership positions), but do not truly have a positive impact on the workplace. Tokenism isn't progressive, and it especially causes harm to tokenized individuals, causing extra pressure to succeed due to being perceived as representative of a group and often leaving them in an alienating work environment" – Source: Catalyst

6.0 Who Needs to Start the Conversation? (3 of 3)

This report released by Catalyst is about how Empowering Workplaces Combat Emotional Tax For People of Colour in Canada.

These are the Do's and Don't of Disability Sensitivity presented by the Rick Hansen Foundation.

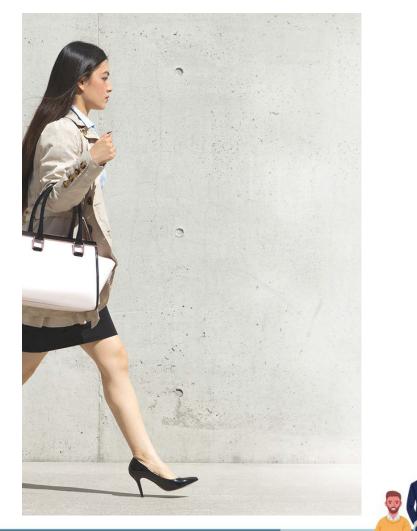This Infographic from The 519 is on Avoiding Assumed Use of Gendered Titles.

Scenario: Checkpoint 3

Pearl has created a list of questions that she wants to use as a guide to understand her employees' concerns and ensure that their needs are being met. As a leader, she wants to take the lead on initiating conversations and ensure that her questions create a sense of psychological safety.

What should Pearl keep in mind when developing these questions? Select all that apply.

- ❏ Keep questions open-ended so that employees feel safe answering the questions in as much detail as they feel comfortable with
- ❏ Make questions pointed and targeted
- ❏ Provide employees with actions that they should be doing
- ❏ Make all questions optional
- ❏ Ask employees about the role you can play as a leader to support them

Scenario: Checkpoint 3 (Solution)

Pearl has created a list of questions that she wants to use as a guide to understand her employees' concerns and ensure that their needs are being met. As a leader, she wants to take the lead on initiating conversations and ensure that her questions create a sense of psychological safety.

What should Pearl keep in mind when developing these questions? Select all that apply.
- ❑ Correct: Keep questions open-ended so that employees feel safe answering the questions in as much detail as they feel comfortable with
- ❑ Incorrect: Make questions pointed and targeted
- ❑ Incorrect: Provide employees with actions that they should be doing
- ❑ Correct: Make all questions optional
- ❑ Correct: Ask employees about the role you can play as a leader to support them

6.1 Asking the Right Questions (1 of 2)

A leader in an organization is someone who manages a team or several teams, and/or has an important stake in the organization and a role in making decisions that push for change. The following are some questions that you can ask the employees you lead and manage:

Systemic Barriers to Success

- What are some barriers to your success in this organization?
- Can I play a role in removing some of the barriers? What can I do?

Creating a Sense of Belonging

- Whose voice or what perspective is missing from this conversation?
- How can I help amplify your voice and that of other underrepresented voices?

Individual Experiences

- Do you feel safe enough to take risks at work? To contribute? To belong to the community?
- What percentage of your time is spent on addressing exclusion or microaggressions against you or others?

> When asking your questions, consider the difference and impact between person-first language and identity-first language. Visit the Public Health Sudbury and Districts website to learn more about position statements.

6.1 Asking the Right Questions (2 of 2)

When starting the conversation, creating a safe space by setting ground rules is important. Safe spaces allow individuals to feel comfortable having brave and honest conversations, where one can openly express themselves and their ideas to others on a team without risk of punishment, humiliation, or rejection.

Let individuals know the following:

- "Confidentiality is important, and unless you want me to share information outside of this conversation, I will not do so."

- "It is important for me to hear your perspective and understand the various inequities faced by employees at work. Doing so, as a leader, it will help me determine ways to remove potential barriers for your success. However, you do not have to partake if you wish not to, and I will respect whatever decision you make." (To learn more, read the Harvard Business Review article "Getting Over Your Fear of Talking About Diversity".)

Although these questions are important to start the conversation with your employees, remember that these topics can be triggering to some. Respect the individual if they want to opt out of sharing or if they do not feel comfortable answering the question.

Explore additional resources presented by Catalyst related to having challenging conversations and talking across differences.

Starting the Conversation: Case Studies (1 of 4)

Section 4.0 #3: "Bolstering Confidence" by creating opportunities for discussion in safe spaces

Small/Medium Organization: Hero Digital – Marketing and Advertising

As a way to start important conversations, create an opportunity to exchange ideas and build team dynamics, Hero Digital started a book club that focuses on self-development and diversity and Inclusion topics.

"We're lucky that Hero provides the book for everyone who wants to participate in order to make book club as accessible as possible. To ensure everyone has enough time to commit to reading, we only host book club three times a year, and we encourage people to attend the discussion even if they haven't finished the book. The beauty of group reading is that it creates a natural social circle that can fill in any blanks in comprehension and motivate each other to read. Of course, you may still need to inspire the group, including by demonstrating top-down support. For instance, our CEO Dave Kilimnik read and joined the discussion at our kickoff meeting. This set the example."

Select the following link for more on Hero Digital's Book Club: How to start a company wide book club that fosters inclusion.

#IndigenousReads encourages reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples through sharing literature written by First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples. Read more about #IndigenousReads.

Section 5.0 #4: "Co-Creation" – Developing solutions with Employee Resource Groups

Large Organization: VMWare Inc.

A significant part of VMWare's effort in the aftermath of George Floyd's death was designed to ensure that its Black colleagues felt secure. These efforts were co-created with the organization's Employee Resource Group, the "African American POD ("Power of Diversity") community.

A director in the organization felt that her white colleagues separate the Black people who have violently died in racist incidents as being somehow different from their co-workers. "By sharing, I wanted them to see that it's all Black people that have fear, not just 'those Black people'."

The company created an intranet page that used the hashtag #wehearyou for them to share their feelings and concerns. Additionally, as part of the campaign, VMWare contributes to social justice organizations and matches employees' donations. It has also instituted more training on inclusion for its managers.

Starting the Conversation: Case Studies (3 of 4)

Large Organization: IBM partnering with IISB (International Indigenous Speakers Bureau)

One company that shines in this area of education and diversity training is the International Business Machines Corporation (IBM) because of the depth and breadth of their commitment to Native/Indigenous diversity and development initiatives. Recognized by Mediacorp Canada Inc. as one of Canada's Best Diversity Employers for 2021, IBM is proving it is one of the leaders in diversity, inclusion and Indigenous reconciliation in the corporate world.

"At IBM, we are seeking to educate everyone in our organization to shift, shape and broaden the way decisions are made across the board," said Sophia Dozier, diversity and inclusion leader at IBM. "We have diversity training, sure, but our approach goes much deeper than that by exposing IBMers to different cultural perspectives on a regular basis from many angles."

IISB speakers illuminated IBM staff on topics such as the benefits of neurodiversity, Two-Spirit perspectives, and what it means to see with an Indigenous lens.

Read how IISB is shifting corporate culture through Indigenous Engagement.

Starting the Conversation: Case Studies (4 of 4)

Section 4.0 #3: "Bolstering Confidence" through formal training opportunities

Large Organization: BMO

BMO launched its Road to Allyship training program to help employees on their own journey to allyship with the 2SLGBTQ+ community. Through the training, BMO employees have been able to have difficult conversations about how individuals can show up for each other encouraging staff to ask questions and educate themselves on the issues so they're more aware, empathetic and active listeners.

Since completing the training program, the bank's Chief Inclusion Office has learned that she's not the only employee who didn't know what it feels like to identify with a marginalized community. "If you don't have that lived experience, [then] you don't know what it's like identifying with the [2SLGBTQ+] community. The training program is eye-opening."

Now, when employees see micro-aggressions from their colleagues, they know they can step up and speak up. Additionally, The bank continues to focus efforts on its gender pronoun initiative that provides branch managers with the tools and resources required to train employees to have inclusive conversations with customers.

Considerations for Small and/or Non-Profit Organizations

Small or non-profit organizations tend to lack the resources that are readily available in larger or for-profit organizations – time, human resources capacity or budget, etc. – to help them along their Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) journey. The following are some considerations to help these organizations to begin and continue on their EDI journey:

- **Partner with other organizations:** If your organization does not have a subject matter expert on staff, seek one out from outside your company. Partner with other similar-sized organizations to pool talent and resources to address EDI within your industry and context.

- **Trainings in EDI need not be expensive or complicated:**
  - Create an exchange program between organizations to access knowledge and training opportunities
  - There are high-quality, free materials online that can serve as an excellent starting point to Starting the Conversation. Access free tools, guidelines, and examples of leading practice to help you Start the Conversation

Considerations for Intermediate/Advanced Organizations

As you advance through your EDI journey, continuous education means enhanced people and data analytics.

The type of data being collected is critical to understand the depth of systemic barriers within organizations. This includes information on the nuances and complex layers of specific roles and responsibilities at the workplace and how it differs for women and/or non-binary people, Racialized, Black, and/or People of Colour, People with disabilities (including invisible and episodic disabilities), 2SLGBTQ+ and/or gender and sexually diverse individuals, and "Aboriginal" and/or Indigenous Peoples.

A collection of comprehensive data will give direction and provide greater equity in approaching solutions. Ask questions such as:

- Is the self-identification data you collect specifically role-based data or just aggregate data?

- Do you know how digital transformation or remote work is impacting different racialized, gender, and intersectional identities?

- How might technology implementation support, or contradict, equitable hiring and retention practices?

- Do you know which constituencies in your organization may experience job risk in the future? Do you have strategies to address those risks?

Additional Resources (1 of 3)

There are many other resources that you can leverage to help you start and continue the conversation at your organization.

- **Government of Canada**
  - #IndigenousReads shares literature written by First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples.
- **International Indigenous Speakers Bureau (IISB)**
  - Shifting Corporate Culture through Indigenous Engagement
- **The 519**
  - Starting Conversations: Avoid Assumed Use of Gendered Titles
- **Catalyst: Engaging in Conversations About Gender, Race, and Ethnicity in the Workplace**
  - Conversation Ground Rules (infographic)
  - Talking Across Differences: Ask Catalyst Express
- **The Canadian Congress on Inclusive Diversity and Workplace Equity (Canadian Congress)**
  - Online Courses and Training Curriculum information

Additional Resources (2 of 3)

- **Deloitte**
  - [Black in Canada: Acknowledging our past, owning our present, and changing our future](#)
- **The Rick Hansen Foundation**
  - [The Power of Disability Inclusive Language](#)
  - [The Do's & Don'ts on disability sensitivity](#)
- **University of Alberta**
  - [Coursera Indigenous Canada Course](#) **(Free)**
- **Pride at Work Canada**
  - [Know Your Rights: A Guide for LGBTQ2+ Employees](#)
- **The Comfortable Race Conversation Process**
  - [Six module program to understand diversity, equity and inclusion](#) **(Paid)**
- **Catalyst**
  - [Empowering Workplaces Combat Emotional Tax for People of Colour](#)

Additional Resources (3 of 3)

- **Fortay**
  - [People Experience](#)
- **Sudbury Public Health and Districts**
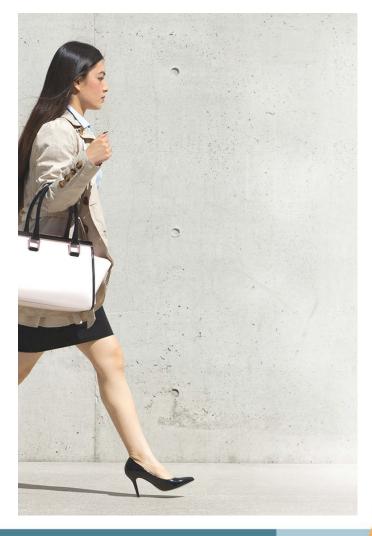 - [Position statement: People with Disabilities Person-Centered Language](#)

Scenario: Conclusion

With the help of the Starting Your Conversation tool, Pearl is pleased to see an increase in employee engagement and retention!

She is looking forward to inviting local artists and grassroots organizations as well to continue driving the conversation forward in the upcoming months.

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Continue your journey: Which tile is next for you?

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