

Race *in the* Workplace

*Zoom in partnership with TIME for Learning invited **Shaun Harper**, one of the world's leading racial equity experts, to join Zoom's Chief Diversity Officer **Damien Hooper-Campbell** for a multi-part series focused on practical approaches to improving and advancing racial equity, diversity, and inclusion in organizations.*

For many leaders, tackling race in the workplace is challenging, and so they have historically chosen avoidance as their primary strategy. Many executives have little to no personal and professional experience talking about racism, and are afraid of being naïve, making mistakes that make them seem insensitive, or worse, racist.

But since the recent murders of many Black people, including George Floyd and Breonna Taylor, avoidance is no longer an option. The issues of police brutality in Black communities, structural and systemic racism, anti-Blackness, and white supremacy, as well as inaction on long-standing racial problems have come to the fore, and corporations have felt compelled to make internal and external statements stating that they are anti-racist and that Black lives matter.

However, these statements have to be more than just words in a moment of crisis. This can't be a moment, it must be a movement that leads to long-term, demonstrable progress on racial equity goals, and increased value on the lives and professional contributions of people of color in the workplace.

This document will summarize the key takeaways from each episode. To watch or learn more about the other episodes in the series, please visit time.com/raceintheworkplace.

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Essential Takeaways: Episode 9

Communicating Company Commitment to Racial Justice

This episode delves into how companies and leaders can authentically communicate their commitment to racial justice in particular, but also to equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) as a whole within their organizations.

When the Black Lives Matter movement first started, many organizations issued declarations that racism is bad. Many gave monetary contributions as well to support the movement. And while this is a positive step, it has to be backed-up with authenticity and consistency. You have to ask before taking those public steps: does your own corporate culture reflect these values?

Communicating your dedication to EDI should not come only in times of crises but should be inserted into the fabric of your company's culture—expressed not just through words but in action as well.

7 Communication Principles of Racial Justice

Think of these as rules on how to authentically communicate a commitment to racial equity and racial justice.

1. **Integrity and honesty.** You cannot be communicating a commitment to EDI when your workplace is terribly inequitable and riddled with racial injustices. Make sure what you are communicating is in line with the reality of your workplace.
2. **Bravery.** Don't write statements about EDI that are soft and don't actually denounce sexism, racism, etc. Don't opt for soft, semantic substitutes for racism—call racism and white supremacy what it is. This requires bravery in the way you communicate around racial issues.
3. **Consistency.** Just like many advertisers that run ads specifically targeting Black people on networks with large audiences of Black viewers, you should carefully craft your job descriptions and recruitment ads as you reach out to communities of color you want to attract to your workplace. You should tell all people, not just people of color, about how EDI is a serious core principle of your organization.
4. **Strategy.** Just like you have a strategy for sales and product marketing, you must have a well-thought-out plan of how to market your commitment to EDI. You should include outcome targets, as well as other indicators and metrics of success around your corporate EDI goals.
5. **Inclusivity.** Make sure that you include all racial and ethnic groups when you form and communicate your EDI goals—not just Black people. Include a range of people, including Latinx, Asian American, LGBTQ, and more.
6. **Multidimensionality.** Rely on a vast array of modalities to communicate and convey your company's commitment to EDI and racial justice. Have a communication strategy that takes advantage of traditional, social, and print media.
7. **Adaptability and responsiveness.** You must continue to change and keep up with what's urgent now—the larger context of racial problems in society and how that spills over into your corporate culture.

9 Ways to Communicate Commitment Internally

1. **Through everyday actions**—not by what you say, but by what you do. We tend to think of communication as formal and written (which it should be too) but you also communicate through your actions.
2. **Frequently.** One way to tell what's important to a leader is that they repeatedly talk about it—every speech, every memo. Make EDI part of your everyday messaging.
3. **Transparently.** It is often hard for employees to express what their organization's goals are for EDI because they don't know. Executives developing the EDI strategy need to communicate it clearly and consistently.
4. **Across all levels.** Everyone across the organization must have access to the information. From the mailroom and cafeteria to mid-level management and the C-suite, everyone must know the organization's EDI goals, where there are shortcomings, and what is being done to improve or fix them.
5. **With accountability.** If you are a leader, you have a duty to communicate to the people who report to you that you will hold them accountable for their implementation of the company's EDI goals. It must be made explicitly clear and enforced.
6. **Leverage a multitude of platforms.** Your commitment must be communicated through all different platforms and forums, including town halls, Slack, emails, etc. Leverage all the ways that you bring employees together to communicate dedication to EDI.
7. **Empower internal influencers.** Look for people that your employees respect. Identify and empower these people to espouse your company's EDI goals.
8. **With ERGs.** Work with them to develop and disseminate your EDI messaging within your company.
9. **Formally and illustratively.** Just like an end-of-year financial report, you should create a formal, detailed document of what your EDI goals are, what you need to do to meet them, and how you will improve in the coming year.

6 Ways to Communicate During and After a Racial Crisis

1. **Reach out to a diverse advisor set.** Normally when a crisis erupts, leaders call their legal counsel and lead PR person, who are usually white. They may not understand how things will land with people of color. Recognize this and surround yourself with a set of advisors who are diverse, realizing that one person of color can't speak for all people of color. However, you still need to get a diverse opinion on how to proceed.
2. **Reach out to employees of color.** Don't ask them to take on the burden of solving the problem but do communicate your concern for them. Ask them how they are doing. Let them know what your response is going to be and how you plan to handle problems like these going forward.
3. **Invite input from employees of color.** Ask employees of color to share their thoughts and opinions on your response to the crisis.
4. **Name what happened explicitly.** Too many times corporate statements about a racial crisis are vague and imprecise. If it was racist, call it racist. If it was homophobic, call it homophobic.
5. **Don't stop communicating after the crisis.** Don't just try to make it go away as quickly as possible in order to get back to business as usual. If you do this, it says that you don't actually care about what happened as long as the brand isn't damaged. Keep talking about it and learn from it.
6. **Use it as an opportunity to teach your industry.** Of course, racial incidents are embarrassing but help out other organizations and people by sharing what you did right, and what you could have done better. Give them the lessons you learned.

Where to Communicate EDI Commitment Externally

- **On the website and in external-facing brochures and other materials.** It might surprise you how few organizations actually have a page on their website that focuses on their EDI values.
- **Create and disseminate employee and client testimonials** about your commitment to EDI, if those stories are authentic and true.
- **At industry meetings and conferences.** Present what you are doing around EDI so others can learn from your success.
- **At virtual info sessions hosted on Zoom.** Hold a briefing live, via a Zoom Webinar, that can be potentially seen by people around the world to talk about concrete examples of what you are doing to meet your EDI goals.
- **Leverage influencers.** Ask people who have deep connections and networks across the globe to be EDI ambassadors for your company.
- **Invest responsibly.** Put your money where your mouth is and invest dollars into Black communities, organizations, and movements like Black Lives Matter.

This concludes our series on Race in the Workplace. We so appreciate you joining this important conversation for one session, some of them or all of them.

Let's not stop now. Check out more info and takeaways from additional episodes of the Race in the Workplace series, in partnership with Zoom and TIME for Learning at time.com/raceintheworkplace.