7 Ways Entrepreneurs Can Ensure Better Equality at Their Workplace

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Although every company operates better with some type of structure, establishing a hierarchy can also lead to equality challenges for an entrepreneur. Even with the best intentions, it's one thing to want to treat everyone equally, and it's another thing to be able to deliver on that.

Workplace equality is a mission I focus on in my own organization. With only 29 percent of women in senior management positions globally, it's an issue that can't be ignored. There are a lot of areas that need improvement, and it can be tough to know where to start.

I'm not perfect at it, but I have found some ways to improve the level of equality in my workplace that could help others do the same.

1. Rethink titles.

Although an organization has to use work titles to some degree to help designate roles and responsibilities, having too many can alienate and confuse. It sends the message that some more are more important than others. In reality, it's everyone in the company that creates success, often those closest to the customer with no specific title.

Instead of having C-level executive titles, my company only has president, vice president and director titles. Everyone else is only designated by their respective departments.

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2. Equalize the hiring process.

For too long, there have been gaps in terms of female executives, especially in the tech industry. It's important to develop a more diverse executive team. There are so many skills and perspectives that a varied team can offer than one made up solely of one gender.

I have made it my focus to diversify my team as much as possible. In addressing a target audience of parents that often involves mothers as the primary purchaser, it's vital to have more women on my team who understand that perspective. Currently, two of the five executives on my team are female.

Starting with equality at the top can set a precedent for your hiring process across the organization, sending the message that every aspect of the company should be as diverse as possible when it comes to talent acquisition.

Also, recruit in new areas of the community, including partnering with diverse community organizations, universities, job fairs, and trade schools where you can find a broader talent pool.

3. Be transparent about pay scales.

Toxic workplaces can occur when people are not open about pay scales or pay levels. Resentment can build up about the vast differences in pay and benefits if these are not openly shared

across the company with specific performance goals aligned with that pay scale.

In contrast, companies should be more open similar to what Buffer has done with its pay scale information. The company has set a precedent by developing its salary formula and making it public so anyone can see how employees get paid.

Along the same vein, if you do hire people, don’t hire men and women at different price ranges. For example, if your last VP of Marketing was a man and was making a certain amount, then make sure that if you hire a woman to fill that role, she is starting at a similar salary.

4. Don’t encourage cliques.

For too long, many companies have created the “cool kids club” within their organizations. This typically involves a clique of employees that leadership favors and spends the most time with. The result is that everyone else can feel excluded and devalued.

Cut out the cliques at your organization. This also includes dividing time for one-on-ones equally. For example, if you go out to lunch with one VP all the time, then you will need to create some kind of rotating schedule so that each VP gets a similar amount of time.

Additionally, it’s important to allot equal time to employees at all levels. I have created a digital calendar with available time slots where anyone in the company can sign up and have a coffee or lunch with me throughout the month. Opening that time up for others to see they can book a time with me empowers them and sends the message that I would like to meet with everyone and value each employee.

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5. Create a culture that is open to all types of talent.

To diversify your talent base, you need to establish a culture within your company that encourages diversity, inclusion, and equality. In doing so, you can attract diverse talent that can help your organization. Focus on universal human needs rather than individual judgments, such as looking down on women for balancing their other roles as mothers.

6. Add flexibility to work hours.

Flexibility in how and where your team works also acknowledges different needs rather than expecting everyone to adhere to a set schedule. It recognizes that every employee has their own life outside of work that counts and should be prioritized.

In providing a flexible work schedule, including telecommute and remote work, I have seen productivity levels rise in my company. Everyone is happier and more productive during their working hours.

7. Develop an equal opportunity policy.

While you can have a culture and work environment geared toward equality, it still is beneficial to formalize it with an equal opportunity policy. You can share this publicly and refer to it within your company, when necessary. Should there be a situation where you are not sure what to do, it helps to have a written policy to refer back to as a foundation for all decisions.

The equal opportunity policy should outline your standard policy for recruitment, hiring, evaluation and promotion processes. It also needs to define titles, pay scale, work

time, and benefits. Posting it on your website can help attract the right talent as well as tell your audience how you operate.

Keep assessing.

Finally, society evolves, laws change and perceptions shift. Your strategy for equality in the workplace can’t be static. Each year, make it a practice to review your policy, strategies and results to determine if you could improve any aspect of how you view or incorporate workplace equality in your company. Doing so also keeps equality and inclusion at the top of mind when making decisions, interacting with your team and addressing any situations that arise.https://www.entrepreneur.com/article/353542