

Diversity & Inclusion

Lunch 'n Learns

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OVERVIEW

Pacific Blue Cross established a Diversity & Inclusion Committee in October 2017. The team consists of 22 members that are involved in four types of initiatives: Workplace, Community, Communications, and Events. One of their most successful workplace initiatives to-date has been the development of monthly "Lunch 'n Learn" sessions, where employees discuss a variety of diversity topics, including: Unconscious Bias, Inclusive Language, Mindfulness in Conflict Resolution, and Ableist Language. These sessions have brought the team closer together and created a safe space to have a dialogue on important topics.

OBJECTIVES

Pacific Blue Cross's (PBC) Diversity and Inclusion Committee wants to increase company-wide awareness of Diversity & Inclusion (D&I) related topics. Their mission is to inspire people and celebrate differences to continuously improve understanding of one another and cultivate a respectful co-existence in the workplace. One of the ways they've begun to do this is by piloting D&I Lunch 'n Learn sessions in order to:

- Broaden the definition of what Diversity and Inclusion means.
- Increase awareness and respect for everyone in the workplace.
- Create a safe space for employees to have an open-dialogue around sensitive topics.

APPROACH

In order to get buy-in from the entire organization, the D&I Committee has initially approached these discussions as *Reflection Sessions* and holds them in a 30-minute format over lunch.

With this being a new initiative introduced at PBC, several steps have taken place:

- Piloting the sessions within the Diversity and Inclusion committee.
- Receiving feedback from the committee members on the structure of the sessions and topics of interest.
- Expanding the discussion to all PBC employees who are interested in creating a dialogue around a particular topic related to diversity and inclusion.

Piloting the Sessions with the D&I Committee

The idea to host these Lunch 'n Learn sessions came out of the second meeting of the Diversity & Inclusion Committee. During an exercise developing their Mission & Vision statements, the committee recognized that it was important for them to create a focus on and provide education around diversity related topics. It was agreed by all that presenting the information in a 30-minute format over lunch would achieve this goal.

Receiving Feedback

The D&I Committee wanted to make sure that they approached these topics in a way where everyone felt open and safe to speak, so they started by introducing these sessions at the beginning of their meetings. They did this to gauge what the committee members thought of the proposed topics, and collect any feedback before bringing the topics to a larger audience. This ensured they were getting the topics people were most interested in, while approaching it in the right way.

Expanding the Discussion

A great opportunity to expand the conversation was in the last two weeks of January, to align with *Bell Let's Talk Day*. The D&I Committee ran an awareness campaign on the stigma around mental illness. This included stories from employees about personal experiences with mental illness, and a shared space for people to write what mental illness means to them and/or words of encouragement. All employees were given the option to remain anonymous. During this time, the team hosted four *Start a Conversation* sessions. These were 30 minute lunch 'n learn style sessions in which they discussed the stigma around mental illness and opened the floor to anyone wanting to discuss both positive and negative experiences and explore how they can foster sensitivity and inclusivity in the workplace.

OUTCOMES

After introducing these sessions company-wide, not only did the D&I Committee receive positive feedback, but it has also led them to explore the possibility of sessions featuring guest speakers and the development of a Mental Health Network/Employee Resource Group.

LESSONS LEARNED

There were many lessons learned in the process of developing D&I Lunch Sessions:

Ensuring There's Enough Time

During the inception of these diversity discussions, speakers were given 10 minutes to present a given topic, but this wasn't giving the group enough time to really create a dialogue. This is why it was determined that using the full 30 minutes over lunch would be the best approach.

Refining Content So That It Is Relatable

Given the broad nature of some of the discussion topics, presentation decks have been adjusted and pared down depending on who is in the audience. This has provided clarity for future topics and how to best make content relevant in a workplace setting.

Creating a Safe Space with Tangible Actions

It is important to PBC that people feel safe to discuss their points of view, how they think they can contribute or how they can make a change related to the topics. By ending each session with an action item or challenge related to the topic, it allows the group to self-reflect and provides an opportunity for them to contribute in a way that is meaningful for themselves and others.

NEXT STEPS

PBC's plan for the remainder of the pilot year is to make the presentations available for the entire organization through their intranet and rotate through a handful of topics. This will not only allow staff who missed a topic the first time to contribute, but will give staff who have attended a previous session (i.e. unconscious bias) the opportunity to discuss what they have learned since they last attended.