

TEAM BUILDING

8 Ways You May Be Politically Incorrect

Sometimes, trying not to be offensive can actually be offensive. Here are some pointers on when and when not to keep everything PC. 🔗

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The concept of "Political Correctness" has been a common part of office vernacular for over 30 years now.

Sometimes it's good to throw a little political incorrectness into the mix. Sometimes it's bad. And sometimes it's just plain ugly. I consulted my good friend and social observer, writer Carolyn Roark, to help determine P.C. issues that get unsuspecting people in trouble these days. Here are our favorites.



The Good:

1. Acknowledging race... and gender, and sexuality, etc.

Does everyone in the same group like exactly the same things or feel exactly the same way about all issues? Of course not, but groups DO tend to share common tastes and interests.

Demographics and target markets are based on that. So while you don't want to overgeneralize ("Everybody knows all white people love mayonnaise"), we shouldn't shy away from what statistics show us, whether talking about the TV shows that Asians tend to prefer or the kind of books middle aged women buy. As a marketer, you have to look for the trends and ferret out the assumptions versus the truth.

2. Acknowledge assistive devices.

If a person uses a wheelchair, a hearing aid, cane or other assistive device, they know you see it. So, your coworker does not need you to pretend you don't. Acknowledge the device normally if it comes up in conversation. Don't use euphemisms, or let your sentence trail off awkwardly. The physically disabled

are perfectly competent, normal people, and that device is an ordinary part of their lives. For you to pointedly ignore it makes them feel just as uncomfortable as it does when someone fusses or treats them as incapable.

3. Say "Merry Christmas" and mean it. Or "Happy Hanukkah." Or "Have a blessed day."

If you sincerely want to wish someone health, happiness and prosperity, you should do it. Just do it in the way that is most meaningful to you. Even if you guess their religious proclivity wrong as long as you are not proselytizing, at least you intended well wishes. And regardless, if they respond with "Happy Holidays" or "Assalamu Alaikom", just say "Thank you." and be warmed by their blessing."

The Bad:

4. Using "Unpaid internships" to get free labor.

The days where an unpaid internship often led to plum job opportunities are over. Now it is largely a way to exploit young, inexperienced workers. Asking freelancers and artists to work for free is an insult, too. Instead, offer a small stipend, barter for mentoring, or use a limited project as test to evaluate for a full opportunity.

5. Hedging your unpopular opinions... not that there's anything wrong with that.

If you're going to make a claim about someone else's beliefs or practices, make it and stand by it. Of course it's best if you can support your statement with facts and logic. If you can't, be prepared to be humbled by those who can. But if you're going to dismiss or cut down someone else's ideas, don't try and cover with the "I'm only joking" line. If you aren't willing to back it up with facts and conviction, don't say it in the first place.

6. Using demographics or statistics to pigeonhole your colleagues, employees or customers.

Yes, Millennials tend to manifest certain characteristics, Baby Boomers have certain preferences. **Inc.** NEWS
communicate differently. But don't assume that means you understand everything that motivates people's thoughts and actions just because they fall into a certain demographic.

The Ugly:

7. Asking a minority to speak for everyone in their group.

We've all seen it. Don't confuse ignorance and inclusiveness. A topic of conversation comes up, and suddenly someone turns to the Jewish guy, or the gay girl, or the black man, and says "What does your community think?" No one likes to be singled out or

put on the spot like this. And no one likes to be reduced from an individual to the archetype for a whole group. If someone offers a racial, gender, or other perspective, listen to them, and consider them for the individual they are.

8. Using social media to flame or shame.

Freedom of speech is an amazing right, and yes, you are free to use it as you see fit. Today, social media is an awesome way of getting your message out. But the combination of the two has somehow produced an environment that often goes far beyond incivility into violence and hatred. Feel free to disagree with someone else's tweets, posts and memes. But avoid using epithets, slanders or calling for violent retribution if you find their content objectionable.

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