

Addressing Bullying at Work



By Jacqueline Munson and Christopher Thompson, Cisco 

BULLYING IN THE workplace erodes confidence and stifles the free exchange of ideas and information that are vital for innovation. We are very cognizant of the impact bullying can have and address the issue in many ways.

Cisco actively works to promote a sense of individual responsibility through leadership development courses and “Safe Space” training. These courses equip employees with the skills and confidence to address bullying or any hostile behavior to ensure everyone knows what is and what is not acceptable in the workplace. The goal is to foster a culture where people are free to disagree, an environment where employees know they have the right to bring their entire selves to work without fear of retribution.

Policies designed to maintain a high-quality work environment that supports and respects every individual underpin a no tolerance approach for harassment of any kind. In the case of an incident, there are multiple reporting avenues that generate an investigation and ensure appropriate actions are taken to resolve each issue.

One aspect of bullying is the psychological impact it has on its victims. To reach out to those who are being bullied and harassed, employees from around the world came together and contributed a video to the “It Gets Better Project” on YouTube. They delivered very personal messages to convey that it’s possible to find a place where “diversity is valued and seen as a strength,” and “life will get better; in fact, it can get great.”

Two employee resource groups: the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender and Advocates (GLBT&A) and Cisco Disabilities Awareness Network (CDAN), joined together in November to increase awareness of bullying through education and open discourse at an event with the Stand Up Foundation. The event was broadcast both internally and externally online to ensure everyone, regardless of location, had an opportunity to learn and benefit from the insights. The event complemented work being done with high schools across the country, bringing students together, in a virtual forum, to collaborate and formulate solutions that address cyber-bullying.

Creating a culture where alternative viewpoints, perspectives and ideas are not only welcomed but sought out is important. In practice, offering flexible work arrangements that allow employees to observe religious holidays, encouraging them to wear pink on “Out and About” day, creating opportunities to bring their children to work, and sponsoring No Name Calling Week are some of the ways to support and celebrate the ‘whole selves’ of employees.

Striving to create an inclusive culture is important because when everyone is contributing, there’s no limit to what can be created and accomplished together. **PDJ**

Jacqueline Munson drives the Inclusion and Diversity strategy and Christopher Thompson is a Senior Director in the Engineering Group and Global Leader of the GLBT&A ERG. For more information on Cisco’s inclusion and diversity efforts, please go to www.cisco.com/go/diversity.