

EXERCISE: RELIGION AND SPIRITUALITY: WHAT COULD BE HAPPENING HERE?

Purpose

The purpose of this exercise is to help you understand better the intersection of religion and the workplace.

Introduction

There is a strong movement toward bringing religion and spirituality into the workplace. Because so much time is spent at work, some people no longer want to separate work and religion. It is critical for business leaders to understand the role of religion in today's workforce.

Guidelines

In small groups, use the following questions as a guide to discuss each scenario:

- What are the possible explanations for this person's behavior?
- How should management respond to this situation?
- How should the employee respond to this situation?
- How should the employee's coworkers respond to this situation?

SCENARIO ONE Sonia, who was recently hired, started to wear loose-fitting clothes and a headscarf to work. Behind her back, some coworkers responded with comments such as "Sonia is going to scare off potential clients with her crazy outfits" and "I wonder if Sonia is a part of a radical religious group." Sensing negative sentiments from her coworkers, Sonia becomes more self-conscious and less communicative.

SCENARIO TWO Harte Consulting, LLC, was thrilled to hire Jonathan onto their team. Jonathan's résumé was of the highest quality—he graduated from a top business school with honors. His coworkers are confused, however, when Jonathan seems resistant to working on Saturdays. He claims to have prior engagements and responsibilities. His coworkers begin to question his dedication to his team in particular and the company in general.

SCENARIO THREE Maya—who has just declared, "I'm really hungry"—is at a business lunch where she is served chicken, green beans, and garlic potatoes. She eats the beans, seems uninterested in the rest of her food, and then orders dessert. Her coworkers look at her strangely, and after lunch, they discuss her odd behavior.

SCENARIO FOUR The department's coed softball team has always been considered a big deal since it began 10 years ago. The softball games are played on Sunday mornings and afternoons. Jenny, who was an all-star softball pitcher in high school and college, has just been transferred into the department, and her new coworkers are thrilled that their team has just become more competitive. Jenny, however, declines to be part of the team. Jenny is now tagged as "not a team player" throughout the office.